

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 253

(Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee)(By
Request - Departmental - Transportation)

Environment and Transportation

Judicial Proceedings

Vehicle Laws - Heavy Weight Port Corridor Permits - Regulations

This departmental bill alters the requirements for regulations related to the issuance of heavy weight port corridor permits. Under existing statute, travel routes for these permits must be established through formal regulations. Under the bill, the Secretary of Transportation must establish authorized destinations for the permits by regulation, while travel routes for permitted vehicles must be identified directly on the permit. A vehicle operating under the permit must adhere to the specific route identified on the permit between the Seagirt Marine Terminal and an authorized destination, with no deviation. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill can be implemented with existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect local finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has determined that this bill has minimal or no impact on small business (attached). The Department of Legislative Services concurs with this assessment. (The attached assessment does not reflect amendments to the bill.)

Analysis

Bill Summary/Current Law: Chapters 254 and 255 of 2019 authorized MDOT to establish a permit program that allows an overweight vehicle carrying international freight,

as specified, to travel on roads designated as being part of a heavy weight port corridor. Under current law, the Secretary of Transportation, by regulation, may determine that a vehicle (or combination of vehicles) transporting manifested international freight as the only load in a sealed, seagoing container on a semitrailer is transporting an indivisible load, on the condition that the vehicle (or combination of vehicles) is issued a heavy weight port corridor permit and:

- is carrying at most 100,000 pounds gross maximum vehicle weight;
- has the minimum number of axles required by the permit;
- does not exceed the maximum axle weight (or axle spacing requirements), as established by regulation or specified in the permit;
- is traveling only during the hours as established by regulation or specified on the permit;
- adheres to a unique maximum speed limit specified on the permit; and
- is traveling only on State or county highways that are (1) on the *specific route established by regulation and specified on the permit* between the Seagirt Marine Terminal and a destination authorized by the Secretary of Transportation, with no deviation from the specific route and (2) specifically designated by the Secretary of Transportation as being part of a “heavy weight port corridor.”

The bill retains most of these requirements but removes the requirement that travel routes be established by regulation and removes the reference to designated heavy weight port corridors. Under the bill, a permitted vehicle must travel only on State or county highways that are on the *specific route identified on the permit* between the Seagirt Marine Terminal and a destination authorized by the Secretary of Transportation, with no deviation from the specific route.

Under current law, the Secretary of Transportation must adopt regulations for the issuance of heavy weight port corridor permits. These regulations (1) may set permit fees and (2) must establish axle and gross weight requirements, *routes*, and other necessary criteria.

The bill removes the requirement that routes be adopted by regulation and further requires the Secretary of Transportation to adopt regulations establishing the authorized destinations to which a vehicle or combination of vehicles may travel from the Seagirt Marine Terminal under a permit.

Background: The heavy weight port corridor permit program was established in 2019 to facilitate the movement of overweight international freight on designated State and county highways. According to MDOT, vehicles issued these permits deliver goods between the Port of Baltimore, Tradepoint Atlantic, and designated U.S. Customs facilities.

State Fiscal Effect: MDOT advises that the bill streamlines the process for heavy weight port corridor permits, can be implemented with existing budgeted resources, and does not affect permit fee revenues.

According to MDOT, the current requirement that heavy weight port corridor permit travel routes be established by regulation creates administrative delays when routes need to be modified due to road closures, highway repair projects, and related events. The bill allows MDOT to incorporate these permits into the State Highway Administration's Maryland One Permit Routing System, which is utilized by all other hauling permit types and can approve route changes in seconds.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: SB 149 (Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee)(By Request - Departmental - Transportation) - Judicial Proceedings.

Information Source(s): Department of State Police; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 11, 2026
caw/aad Third Reader - March 21, 2026
Revised - Amendment(s) - March 21, 2026

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ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC IMPACT ON SMALL BUSINESSES

TITLE OF BILL: Vehicle Laws - Heavy Weight Port Corridor Permits - Regulations

BILL NUMBER: HB 253

PREPARED BY:

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PART A. ECONOMIC IMPACT RATING

This agency estimates that the proposed bill:

WILL HAVE MINIMAL OR NO ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MARYLAND
SMALL
BUSINESS

OR

WILL HAVE MEANINGFUL ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MARYLAND SMALL
BUSINESSES

PART B. ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

The bill will have a minimal but positive impact on small business. Small business motor carriers conducting dedicated drayage operations based at the Port of Baltimore will not encounter delays due to unanticipated permit route restrictions for cargo destined for Tradepoint Atlantic.