

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 963 (Montgomery County Delegation)
Environment and Transportation

Montgomery County - Highways - Maximum Speed Limits
MC 1-25

This bill repeals the requirement that Montgomery County, or a municipality located in Montgomery County, perform an engineering and traffic investigation before decreasing a maximum speed limit on a highway. As a result of the change, Montgomery County, or a municipality in Montgomery County, may decrease a maximum speed limit on a highway to no less than 15 miles per hour (MPH) without first performing an engineering and traffic investigation.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund revenues may increase minimally due to more citations for speeding, assuming Montgomery County uses the authorization granted by the bill to decrease speed limits when it would not have done so absent the bill. The District Court can handle any additional caseload with existing resources.

Local Effect: Within Montgomery County, county and municipal expenditures decrease minimally to the extent that fewer engineering and traffic investigations are performed under the bill; county and municipal revenues and expenditures may increase to the extent that speed limits are reduced when they would not have been absent the bill, as discussed below.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law:

Speed Limits – Generally

Unless there is a special danger that requires a lower speed, the maximum lawful speeds on a State highway are (1) 15 MPH in alleys in Baltimore County; (2) 30 MPH on all highways in a business district and on undivided highways in a residential district; (3) 35 MPH on divided highways in a residential district; (4) 50 MPH on undivided highways in other locations; and (5) 55 MPH on divided highways in other locations. A maximum speed limit of more than 55 MPH may not be established on any highway in the State that is not an interstate highway or an expressway, and a maximum speed limit of more than 70 MPH may not be established on any highway in the State.

If, on the basis of an engineering and traffic investigation, a local authority determines that a maximum speed is greater or less than is reasonable or safe under existing conditions on any part of a highway in its jurisdiction, the local authority may establish a reasonable and safe maximum speed limit for that part of the highway, which may:

- decrease the limit at an intersection;
- increase the limit in an urban district to no more than 50 MPH;
- decrease the speed limit in an urban district; or
- decrease the limit outside an urban district to no less than 25 MPH.

An engineering and traffic investigation is not required to conform a speed limit in effect on December 31, 1974, to one of the specified speed limits established by statute.

Altered Speed Limits

Anne Arundel and Montgomery counties and municipalities within the counties may decrease the maximum speed limit to no less than 15 MPH on a highway but only after performing an engineering and traffic investigation. However, a local authority may not implement a *new* speed monitoring system to enforce speed limits on any portion of a highway for which the speed limit has been decreased pursuant to this authorization.

Calvert County is authorized to decrease the maximum speed limit to no less than 15 MPH on Lore Road and, except for Solomons Island Road, each highway south of Lore Road without performing an engineering and traffic investigation, regardless of whether the highway is inside an urban district.

Altered speed limits are effective when posted on appropriate signs giving notice of the limit. Any alteration by a local authority (except in Baltimore City) of a maximum speed limit on a part (or extension) of a State highway is not effective until approved by the State Highway Administration (SHA).

Speed Monitoring Systems

State law authorizes the use of various automated monitoring systems, including traffic control system monitoring systems, speed monitoring systems, school bus monitoring systems, vehicle height monitoring systems, and work zone speed control systems.

Speed monitoring systems must be authorized in a local jurisdiction by the governing body of the jurisdiction (but only after reasonable notice and a public hearing). Before activating a speed monitoring system, a local jurisdiction must publish notice of the location of the speed monitoring system on its website and in a newspaper of general circulation in the jurisdiction. In addition, the jurisdiction must also ensure that each sign that designates a school zone is proximate to a sign that (1) indicates that speed monitoring systems are in use in the school zone and (2) conforms with specified traffic control device standards adopted by SHA. Similar requirements apply to speed cameras established on Maryland Route 210 (Indian Head Highway), grounds of institutions of higher education in Prince George's County, Interstate 83 in Baltimore City, Maryland Route 175 in Anne Arundel County (Jessup Road) between the Maryland Route 175/295 interchange and the Anne Arundel County-Howard County line, and at the intersection of Maryland Route 333 (Oxford Road) and Bonfield Avenue in Talbot County.

An authorizing ordinance or resolution adopted by the governing body of a local jurisdiction must establish certain procedures related to the movement or placement of speed monitoring systems. Specifically, if a jurisdiction moves (or places) a mobile (or stationary) speed monitoring system to (or at) a new location, the jurisdiction may not issue a citation for a violation recorded by that speed monitoring system (1) until signage is installed, as specified and (2) for at least the first 15 calendar days after the signage is installed.

Local Fiscal Effect: Within Montgomery County, county and municipal expenditures decrease to the extent that fewer engineering and traffic investigations are conducted to lower speed limits, pursuant to the bill's authorization.

Although local authorities in Montgomery County are prohibited from installing *new* speed camera systems on any portion of a highway for which the speed limit has been decreased pursuant to the bill's authority, both current law and the bill appear to allow any cameras that are already in operation to continue operation on such highways, even if the speed limits are reduced. Thus, to the extent that local authorities in Montgomery County choose

to lower speed limits on highways with existing speed camera systems in place when they would not have done so absent the bill, local revenues and expenditures increase to the extent more automated enforcement citations are issued and the collected revenues are used for authorized purposes.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 612 of 2024.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation; Montgomery County; Department of Legislative Services

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km/aad

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