Legislative Analysis

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AGRICULTURAL ADDITIVES TO CONTROL ICE ON ROADS

Senate Bill 379 (H-3) as referred to second House committee
Sponsor: Sen. Roger Victory
1st House Committee: Transportation
2nd House Committee: Ways and Means
Senate Committee: Transportation and Infrastructure
Complete to 12-6-20

SUMMARY:

Senate Bill 379 would amend 1951 PA 51 ("Act 51") to require the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to implement a pilot program on the use of agricultural additives to control ice on public roads, highway, and bridges in Michigan. The bill would describe the program's purpose as reviewing the potential effectiveness and environmental impacts of agricultural additives while maintaining the safety and mobility of the motoring public.

The pilot program would have to do at least all of the following:

- Identify and use methods for the use of agricultural additives, including liquid sugar beet by-products, that promote surface adhering and reduce the freezing point of applied substances.
- Examine results from expanded use of agricultural additives, including potential environmental and fiscal impacts.
- Develop best practices and technical guidelines for the use of agricultural additives and for the expansion of that use in the pilot program.
- Convey program information and guidance to local road agencies.
- Use agricultural additives in at least three test locations, each containing public roads, highways, and bridges that may be affected by corrosion and a body of water that may be affected by other commonly used deicers.
- Include collaboration with at least one local road agency.

By June 30, 2025, MDOT would have to submit a report on the pilot program to the members of the House and Senate transportation committees. The report would have to summarize at least all of the following:

- Pilot program activity.
- Review results.
- Potential best practices for the statewide use of agricultural additives based on the results of the pilot program.

Proposed MCL 247.661a

FISCAL IMPACT:

The general research and reporting activities required by the bill would appear to have relatively minor costs that could be absorbed by ongoing department maintenance operations appropriations. The requirement that the department use agricultural additives at certain test

locations would result in additional costs associated with designing, implementing, and reporting on the testing. Specific additional costs could include material purchase, material blending, disbursement, measuring results, and comparison with conventional methods. The amount of potential additional costs, and, specifically, the additional costs of the pilot program as compared to conventional deicing methods, cannot be readily estimated at this time.

The H-2 substitute differs from the bill as passed by the Senate in that it would require three, rather than five, test locations. The substitute also changes the report date from December 31, 2022, to June 30, 2025.

From a longer-term perspective, the pilot program could help determine the impact of agricultural additives on MDOT's direct deicing costs. The program could also help determine whether the use of agricultural additives could reduce the indirect impacts of salt corrosion on transportation structures and motor vehicles and the environmental impacts of salt runoff.

POSITIONS:

A representative of the Michigan Department of Transportation testified in support of the bill. (12-3-20)

The following entities indicated support for the bill (9-16-20):

- Michigan Agri Business
- Michigan Farm Bureau
- Michigan Sugar Company

The Michigan Chemistry Council indicated a neutral position on the bill. (9-15-20)

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