

Senate Fiscal Agency
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SFA



BILL ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 1124 (as enrolled)
Sponsor: Senator Walter H. North
Senate Committee: Transportation and Tourism
House Committee: Transportation

PUBLIC ACT 453 of 2002

Date Completed: 7-15-02

RATIONALE

Recreational vehicles (RVs) such as motor homes, truck campers, and fifth-wheel trailers, allow owners to take their lodging with them when they travel. The largest and most expensive of recreational vehicles, the motor home, can contain all the conveniences of a house: satellite television, global positioning systems, a full kitchen, and reclining chairs and sofas. Previously, the size of motor homes was limited to a length to 40 feet and a width of 102 inches (8.5 feet) under the Michigan Vehicle Code. Some newer motorhome models, however, are manufactured a few feet longer and a few inches wider than the Code permitted. Further, the Code did not speak to the size limitations of RVs other than motor homes, e.g., truck campers or trailer coaches. (For a description of different types of RVs, please see **BACKGROUND**.) It was suggested that the Code be amended to allow for longer and wider motor homes, and to include size restrictions for other recreational vehicles.

CONTENT

The bill amended the Michigan Vehicle Code to revise the length and width requirements of motor homes and other recreational vehicles.

The Code provides that the total outside width of a bus or motor home may not exceed 102 inches, and the total length of any vehicle, except trucks and buses, may not exceed 40 feet. Under the bill, truck campers and trailer coaches also are subject to the width restriction, and an appurtenance (a supplement or accessory) to a truck camper, trailer coach, or motor home may extend up to six inches beyond the 102-inch maximum.

In addition, the length of a motor home may not exceed 45 feet, under the bill.

MCL 257.717 & 257.719

BACKGROUND

According to the Recreational Vehicle Industry Association, all RVs can be divided into two basic categories: towable RVs and motorized RVs. A towable RV can be detached from the vehicle that hauls it, and does not require a special highway movement permit. Folding camping trailers, truck campers, trailer coaches, and fifth-wheels are all towable RVs. The Michigan Association of Recreation Vehicles and Campgrounds (MARVAC) defines a folding camping trailer as a lightweight unit with collapsible sides that fold for towing; a truck camper as a unit loaded onto, or affixed to, the bed or chassis of a pickup; a trailer coach (also known as a travel trailer) as a unit towed by a car, van or pickup by means of a bumper or frame hitch; and a fifth-wheel as a unit towed by a pickup with a special hitch.

Motorized RVs include all motorhomes; they are RVs built on or as an integral part of a self-propelled motor vehicle chassis, combining transportation and living quarters in one unit. The RV industry divides motor homes into three classes: Type A, the largest at 21 to 44 feet; Type B, the smallest at 16 to 21 feet; and Type C, 20 to 28 feet.

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

In response to consumer demand, Type A motor homes have grown increasingly extravagant. Many are available with every conceivable home comfort, including basement storage, washer/dryers, security systems, and hot tubs. To accommodate these additional luxuries, motor home manufactures have increased the length of the vehicles to as long as 44 feet, and created retractable awnings and "slide-outs", or extra rooms that can be extended when the motor home is stationary and electronically retracted when the vehicle is on the road. Even when drawn in, however, some awnings and slide-outs extend a few inches beyond the width limit. For these newer Type A motor homes to travel lawfully on Michigan's highways, then the length and width restrictions under the Code had to be increased. According to a representative from MARVAC, 40 states have already amended their own laws to increase length and width restrictions for motor homes.

Legislative Analyst: Claire Layman

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill will have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: Craig Thiel

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.