



Senate Fiscal Agency
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Senate Bill 465 (Substitute S-2 as passed by the Senate)
Sponsor: Senator Sam Singh
Committee: Transportation and Infrastructure

Date Completed: 2-29-24

RATIONALE

According to testimony before the Senate Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, worsening winter conditions have led to an increase in the number of traffic accidents between snow plows and personal vehicles. These accidents result from a variety of factors, including poor visibility and icy roads, which may make it difficult for a driver to brake in time to avoid a collision. Accordingly, some have suggested that a driver be required to maintain a certain distance from an active snowplow.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to require the operator of a vehicle to maintain a distance of 200 feet from a snowplow when moving. It also would prescribe a civil infraction for a violation of the distances.

This requirement would not apply when the operator of a vehicle was legally overtaking or passing a snowplow. Additionally, if a snowplow stopped at or in an intersection and the operator of a vehicle that was not a snowplow approached it from the rear, the operator of the vehicle would have to stop at least 20 feet from the snowplow.

Proposed MCL 257.643b

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

The bill would increase the safety of Michigan's drivers during winter. Snowplows are heavy and often drive 20 to 30 miles per hour slower than other drivers.¹ As a result, accidents involving snowplows can be serious, such as an incident in 2023 when an ambulance clipped a stopped snowplow and flipped.² In 2021, there were 20 crashes involving a snowplow and, in 2022, 19.³ Snowy and icy conditions decrease traction on the road, making it difficult for a car to brake. According to testimony before the Senate Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, it would take a driver going 55 miles an hour 209 feet to stop and a driver going 35 miles an hour 90 feet. Requiring drivers to maintain a minimum of 200 feet from a snowplow would increase the safety cushion between vehicles, giving drivers enough time to slow and avoid dangerous collisions.

Legislative Analyst: Abby Schneider

¹ Tollefson, Byron, "Bill would require drivers to stay 200 feet from snowplows", *WLNS 6 News*, February 15, 2024.

² Ruble, Kayla, "Ambulance crashes into MDOT plow in Kalamazoo County", *The Detroit News*, March 10, 2023.

³ Tollefson, "Bill would require drivers to stay 200 feet from snowplows".

FISCAL IMPACT

Due to the fine for the civil infraction, the bill would potentially increase revenue for the State and local governmental units.

Fiscal Analyst: Bobby Canell

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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.