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BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Fiscal Agency

Lansing, Michigan 48909

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House Bill 4881 (Substitute H-1 as reported with amendment)
Sponsor: Representative Willis Bullard, Jr.
House Committee: Transportation
Senate Committee: State Affairs, Tourism, and Transportation

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RATIONALE

Under the Michigan Vehicle Code, drivers are permitted to turn right on a red signal, or left if turning into a one-way street going left, unless the turn is specifically prohibited by a traffic sign or signal at more dangerous intersections. Where these turns are prohibited, motorists are warned either by a sign suspended in the air next to the traffic light itself, or by a sign on the ground. Apparently, however, no-turn-on-red signs placed on the ground may be ineffective if they are positioned too far from where the turn actually is made: motorists near the front of the line of cars are often past the point at which a ground sign can be seen. Consequently, illegal turns are made, creating a potentially hazardous situation for motorists and pedestrians, and putting drivers at risk of being, some feel unfairly, ticketed. Thus, some people believe that the Code should specify the location of no-turn-on-red signs, to ensure that drivers were adequately warned before making a turn on red that is prohibited.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to regulate the placement of signs that prohibit drivers from making a turn on a red traffic signal. A no-turn-on-red sign would have to be located above or adjacent to the traffic signal or as close as possible to the point where the turn is made, or at both locations, so that one or more of the signs would be visible to a driver intending to turn, at the point where the turn is made. An additional sign

could be used at the far side of the intersection in the direct line of vision of the turning driver.

The bill also provides that "red arrow and yellow arrow indications have the same meaning as the corresponding circular indications, except that they apply only to drivers of vehicles intending to make the movement indicated by the arrow".

The bill would take effect April 1, 1991.

MCL 257.612

SENATE COMMITTEE ACTION

The Senate Committee adopted an effective date amendment.

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no impact on State government and an indeterminate impact on local units of government. The Michigan Department of Transportation already locates no-turn-on-red signs in accordance with the bill's requirements. Local units of government would incur costs moving signs that are not in compliance with the bill.

ARGUMENTS**Supporting Argument**

The bill would help correct a possibly dangerous situation that exists at some intersections

where a turn on a red light is not allowed. In many cases, a no-turn-on-red sign is hung near the traffic light, giving motorists a good chance to see the sign. In other instances, however, the sign is placed on the ground, often too far from the corner and out of view of the first one or two vehicles stopped at a red light. Unwittingly, drivers at these intersections sometimes make illegal and potentially hazardous turns. Although the State and Federal Manuals of Uniform Traffic Control Devices do address the use of no-turn-on-red signs, the manuals simply state that, "The sign should be erected near the appropriate signal head." The bill specifically would require the sign either to hang near the traffic light or, if placed on the ground, to be positioned as close as possible to the point where a turn is made, or at both locations. Proper placement of these signs would help make drivers more aware that a turn was not allowed, and would protect the safety of pedestrians and other motorists. At the same time, requiring a ground sign to be "as close as possible" to the point where a turn is made would allow traffic agencies to retain some flexibility in sign placement.

Supporting Argument

The bill would bring Michigan law into conformity with Federal standards in regard to red and yellow arrow indicators.

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