



**House  
Legislative  
Analysis  
Section**

Washington Square Building, Suite 1025  
Lansing, Michigan 48909  
Phone 517/373-6466

**ALLOW WIDE FARM VEHICLES ON HWYS**

House Bill 4054 (Substitute H-2)  
First Analysis (6-9-87)

Sponsor: Rep. Gary L. Randall  
Committee: Transportation

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**THE APPARENT PROBLEM:**

The Michigan Vehicle Code specifies the maximum widths of the various vehicles and loads allowed on the state's roads. If a vehicle or load exceeds its maximum allowable width or if it extends beyond the center line of a state trunkline highway, a special permit must be obtained from the Department of Transportation before the vehicle or load can be on the highway. Currently, farm equipment (including farm tractors) may not be wider than 186 inches without having a special permit, and farm equipment wider than 108 inches may not be moved on the highway between sunset and sunrise. However, farmers say these width guidelines restrict the operation of modern day vehicles necessary to normal farming operations.

**THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:**

The bill would strike width restrictions concerning farm equipment (called "implements of husbandry") and instead allow anyone to operate or move farm equipment for normal farming operations on state roads regardless of width without having to get a special permit. The equipment, however, would have to be moved in such a way "as to minimize the interruption of traffic flow". Equipment could not be operated or moved to the left of the center of the roadway: from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise; when approaching the crest of a grade or upon a curve in the highway where the driver's view was obstructed and a hazardous situation was created; when the driver's view was obstructed upon approaching within 100 feet of any bridge, viaduct, or tunnel; or at any time visibility was substantially diminished due to weather conditions. In addition, a person operating or moving equipment would still have to follow all traffic regulations.

Finally, the bill would require that farm equipment that was moved one-half hour before sunrise or one-half hour after sunset (or at any other time when there was not enough light to allow clear vision of people or vehicles on the highway within 500 feet) display lighted rear lamps mounted on the rear, which when lighted would emit a red light plainly visible from a distance of 500 feet to the rear. The equipment would also have to maintain at least one lighted lamp or lantern exhibiting a white light visible from a distance of 500 feet to the front of the vehicle, and a lamp or lantern exhibiting a red light visible from a distance of 300 feet to the rear of the vehicle. Further, the equipment would have to be accompanied by a vehicle which also had rear lamps and followed behind the equipment at a distance of not more than 50 feet illuminating the equipment with its headlights.

**FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:**

According to the Department of Transportation, the bill would have no fiscal implications to the state. (6-4-87)

**ARGUMENTS:**

**For:**

Currently, requirements concerning lamps and lanterns on oversized implements are very weak. The bill would provide for increased use of lamps and lanterns thereby increasing the safety of the travelling public.

**For:**

The development of farm equipment has progressed quite rapidly during the past decade. Improvements in machinery have necessitated increases in the size of farming equipment. Thus, many of the vehicles used are oversized. However, the laws have not kept up with the increases in equipment size. The bill would bring them up to date by making provisions for the use of oversized farm equipment.

**Against:**

The movement of implements of husbandry at an unlimited width could be a safety hazard to the public. In addition, provisions which would allow crossing of the centerline could cause accidents. Further, if permits were not required for oversized equipment, the transportation department would lose the little control it now has over the kinds and conditions of vehicles on the roads.

**POSITIONS:**

The Michigan Farm Bureau supports the bill. (6-4-87)

The Department of Transportation opposes the bill. (6-4-87)

H.B. 4054 (6-9-87)