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**SFA**



**BILL ANALYSIS**

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House Bill 4017 (as reported without amendment)  
Sponsor: Representative James McNutt  
House Committee: Transportation  
Senate Committee: Transportation and Tourism

Date Completed: 4-30-97

### RATIONALE

Under the Michigan Vehicle Code, fire department vehicles, police vehicles, ambulances, and privately owned motor vehicles of volunteer or paid fire fighters and of volunteer or licensed ambulance drivers or attendees may operate as authorized emergency vehicles, as long as they are authorized by the Department of State Police. During the process of authorizing a vehicle to operate as an emergency vehicle, the State Police apparently contact local emergency departments to determine whether the vehicle qualifies as an authorized emergency vehicle under the Code. Some people believe that this process is inefficient, and that the responsibility for authorizing these vehicles should be transferred to local authorities.

### CONTENT

**The bill would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to revise the definition of “authorized emergency vehicle” to delete reference to the Department of State Police in the authorization of emergency vehicles, and provide, instead, for authorization by the chief of a fire department or, in certain cases, a life support agency.**

Under the bill, “authorized emergency vehicle” would mean vehicles of the fire department, police vehicles, ambulances, or privately owned motor vehicles of volunteer or paid fire fighters if authorized by the chief of an organized fire department, or privately owned motor vehicles of volunteer or paid members of a life support agency licensed by the Department of Consumer and Industry Services if authorized by the life support agency. Currently, “authorized emergency vehicle” means vehicles of the fire department, police vehicles, ambulances or privately owned motor vehicles of volunteer or paid fire fighters or privately

owned motor vehicles of volunteer ambulance drivers or licensed ambulance drivers or attendants as authorized by the State Police.

In addition, for purposes currently allowed during an emergency, the bill would include in the definition a vehicle that was owned and operated by a Federally recognized nonprofit charitable organization and used exclusively for assistance during that emergency. Under the Code, such a vehicle (as well as a privately owned emergency vehicle) may be equipped with flashing, rotating, or oscillating red lights for use when responding to an emergency call.

MCL 257.2 & 257.698

### 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

By revising the definition of “authorized emergency vehicle”, the bill would transfer responsibility for authorizing a vehicle to operate as an emergency vehicle from the Department of State Police to the chief of a local fire department or a life support agency that was licensed by the Department of Consumer and Industry Services. The State Police currently consult with these local officials when authorizing vehicles as emergency vehicles. Thus, statutorily transferring this responsibility to local officials would streamline the authorization process and decrease the time needed to designate vehicles as emergency vehicles, especially when crises arise. For many small or rural localities, a moderate or large emergency can exhaust the supply of available officially designated emergency vehicles. The bill would allow local officials to

designate a larger pool of vehicles to be used as emergency vehicles, which could help save lives at accident scenes.

**Response:** The bill would give full authority to local fire chiefs for granting emergency vehicle status to fire-fighting vehicles under their command. There is some concern that removing the State Police from the authorization process would eliminate the possibility of oversight by another agency.

**Supporting Argument**

The bill would include in the definition of “authorized emergency vehicle” a vehicle that was owned and operated by a Federally recognized nonprofit charitable organization and used exclusively for assistance during an emergency. Thus, vehicles used by the American Red Cross, for example, could be designated as emergency vehicles, and equipped with red flashers, under emergency circumstances.

Legislative Analyst: L. Arasim

**FISCAL IMPACT**

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

Fiscal Analyst: B. Baker

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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.