

Legislative Analysis



SPACE BETWEEN TRUCKS IN A PLATOON

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House Bill 5749 (reported from committee w/o amendment)

Sponsor: Rep. Michael Webber

Committee: Transportation and Infrastructure

Complete to 5-7-18

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

(Enacted as Public Act 377 of 2018)

SUMMARY:

Under the Michigan Vehicle Code, the operator of a truck or truck tractor, when traveling on a highway outside of a business or residence district, and when conditions permit, must leave sufficient space between the vehicle and another truck or truck tractor so that an overtaking vehicle may enter and occupy the space without danger.

House Bill 5749 would amend Section 643a of the Code to specify that the above requirement does not apply to a vehicle in a *platoon*.

Platoon is defined in Section 40c of the Code to mean a group of individual motor vehicles that are traveling in a unified manner at electronically coordinated speeds.

A truck or truck tractor traveling on a highway in a platoon is also currently required to allow reasonable access for other vehicles to have safe movement among lanes to enter or exit the highway. The bill would not affect this provision.

MCL 257.643a

FISCAL IMPACT:

The bill would likely have a minimal impact, if any, on state or local costs or revenues. Depending on the number of drivers who would receive civil infractions under Section 643a as it currently exists, but would not receive them under the provisions of the bill, House Bill 5749 could result in a decrease in the amount of revenue going to the state Justice System Fund (JSF). Civil infraction penalty revenue that goes to the JSF supports various justice-related endeavors in the judicial branch and the Departments of State Police, Corrections, and Health and Human Services.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Vehicle platooning refers to the electronic linkage and coordination of speed among a group of trucks. Typically, the lead truck in a platoon controls the speed and braking of the following trucks. Supporters argue that platooning saves time and fuel, reduces emissions, increases safety, and lessens congestion. The definition of platoon and related provisions were added to the Michigan Vehicle Code by Public Act 332 of 2016 (Senate Bill 995), which was part of a package of bills regarding autonomous and self-driving vehicles on

Michigan roads.¹ Among other things, Public Act 332 of 2016 exempted vehicles in a platoon from the requirement in Section 643 of the Code that a vehicle with a gross weight of over 5,000 pounds must maintain a distance of 500 feet between another such vehicle except when overtaking and passing. House Bill 5749 would similarly exempt vehicles in a platoon from a vehicle distance requirement under the Code.

POSITIONS:

The Michigan Teamsters indicated opposition to the bill. (4-24-18)

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.

¹ See <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2015-2016/billanalysis/House/pdf/2015-HLA-0995-CA7C5519.pdf>