

MAXIMUM TRUCK LENGTH ON HIGHWAY: AGRICULTURAL DRAINAGE TUBING

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House Bill 4167 (reported from committee w/o amendment)

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

Sponsor: Rep. Ben Frederick

Committee: Agriculture

(Public Act 35 of 2017)

Complete to 3-23-17

BRIEF SUMMARY: House Bill 4167 amends Section 2 of the Michigan Vehicle Code, which sets the maximum length of vehicles and combinations of vehicles operated on a highway. The bill adds an additional subsection to apply only to trucks and trailers transporting agricultural drainage tubing, and restricts them to a maximum length of 75 feet.

FISCAL IMPACT: The bill appears to have no direct fiscal impact.

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

At present, say knowledgeable observers, companies wishing to transport agricultural drainage tubing through or to Michigan must comply with the current transportation law, which restricts a truck and semitrailer or trailer to 59 feet. Surrounding states and Canada do not have this restriction and instead have a maximum length of 75 feet.¹ As a result, it is difficult for companies to transport the tubing in or through Michigan.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill adds Subsection (j) to Section 2 of the Michigan Vehicle Code to restrict truck and trailer combinations designed and used to transport agricultural drainage tubing to a maximum length of 75 feet. The new subsection would exempt such vehicles from the current Subsection (e), which provides a maximum length for a truck and semitrailer or trailer of 59 feet.

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Proponents of the bill argued that the increased truck length would enhance the Michigan economy. Allowing the larger trucks to transport the agricultural tubing in and through Michigan would put routes in Michigan, instead of having to go around the state. Additionally, a facility in Owosso, Michigan, that makes agricultural drainage tubing, would be able to properly transport their material in and out of Michigan.

¹ E.g. Ohio Revised Code 5577.05(B)(5); Canada- Category 1: Tractor Semitrailer, Part 1- Dimension Limits, page 8, http://www.todaystrucking.com/images/MOUsizamdWeight_2005.pdf; Wisconsin, http://www.topslab.wisc.edu/workgroups/tsws/Advisory%20group/WI_TSWS_currentTSWlaws_v4.pdf.

Against:

Questions were raised whether there should be a weight requirement on the longer trucks. Larger trucks can carry heavier loads, which could negatively impact the roads. As such, putting a weight limit on the longer trucks could help keep the roads from deterioration. Another concern is road safety: larger trucks could endanger other motorists, thus increasing the chance of accidents on public roadways.

Response:

Supporters of the bill have testified that the weight of the agricultural drainage tubing is about 40,000 pounds, which is within the weight limit calculation under Section 7 of the Michigan Vehicle Code (MCL 257.719(7)).

Supporters of the bill have also testified that the larger trucks are equipped with hinges to allow for smoother turns than traditional smaller trucks. As such, the larger trucks would be able to maneuver with and around other cars on a public highway easier than shorter trucks, thus enhancing driver safety.

POSITIONS:

A representative from the Michigan Land Improvement Association supports the bill. (3-8-17)

A representative from the Shiawassee Economic Development Partnership supports the bill. (3-8-17)

A representative from Advanced Drainage Systems supports the bill. (3-8-17)

A representative from the Michigan Department of Transportation supports the bill. (3-8-17)

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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.