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BILL ANALYSIS



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Senate Bill 643 (Substitute S-2 as reported)  
Sponsor: Senator Cameron S. Brown  
Committee: Transportation

Date Completed: 9-18-07

## **RATIONALE**

In 1991, legislation amended the Michigan Vehicle Code to permit the use of rear video displays to help drivers maneuver or park a vehicle. Since that time, new technologies have been developed to improve vehicle safety in a number of ways; these devices include front cameras that can identify low-lying obstructions that might not be visible to a driver, automatic parking mechanisms that maneuver a car into tight spots using video and ultrasonic readings, and detection systems to warn a driver if his or her car is drifting out of its lane or another car is coming too close. In addition, new technologies for official vehicles such as police cars and ambulances often include a video screen that can provide vital information to the driver. Because of current restrictions on the use of video displays in vehicles, however, some of these technologies are not permitted under the Vehicle Code. To enhance safety, it has been suggested that the Code should permit these and other similar uses of video.

## **CONTENT**

**The bill would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to do the following:**

- Permit a motor vehicle to be equipped with a video display to enhance or supplement the driver's view, and remove a current provision that limits such a display to the rear view when the vehicle is motionless or in reverse gear.**
- Permit a police vehicle, fire vehicle, or ambulance to be equipped with a monitor for use with a computer-aided dispatch system or emergency equipment controls.**

- Permit a police vehicle to be equipped with a monitor for use with recording equipment.**
- Prohibit aftermarket devices from being installed or mounted in certain positions or in a manner that interfered with the driver's view or control.**

### Prohibited Video Displays

Under the Code, a person may not equip or operate a motor vehicle with a television viewer, screen, or other means of viewing a television or video broadcast that can be viewed by or reflected to the driver, except as provided.

Under the bill, that restriction also would apply to other media for moving images, and would apply only if the display could be viewed by the driver while the vehicle was in motion and the driver was in the normal driving position.

### Supplementary Display

Currently, a motor vehicle may be equipped with a video display to monitor the rear view of the vehicle, if the monitor is activated only when the vehicle is motionless or in reverse gear and is deactivated within 15 seconds after the vehicle's transmission is shifted out of reverse.

The bill would remove those provisions, and instead would permit a motor vehicle to be equipped with a video display to enhance or supplement the driver's view.

### Displays for Official Vehicles

The bill would permit a police vehicle, fire vehicle, or ambulance to be equipped with a

monitor for use with a computer-aided dispatch system or emergency equipment controls.

In addition, a police vehicle could be equipped with a monitor for use with recording equipment.

### Navigation Systems

The Code allows driver, passenger, and vehicle information and navigation systems displaying information pertaining to vehicle location, available routes and destinations, road layouts, weather conditions, traffic and road conditions, and vehicle conditions. The bill also would refer to traveler services.

A navigation system permitted under that provision must be built into the dashboard or other control area of the vehicle, and must meet all applicable Federal motor vehicle dash safety standards. The bill also would require an audio system, air conditioning, or other accessory controls to meet the same standards.

### Other Provisions

Under the bill, aftermarket devices could not be installed or mounted on the windshield, above the dashboard, in an area within the deployment profile of the vehicle air bags, or in a manner that interfered with the driver's view or control.

The prohibition under the Code does not apply to a radio, heating and air conditioning, or other accessory controls in the motor vehicle. The bill would refer to an audio entertainment system, rather than a radio.

MCL 257.708b

### **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**

Video screens showing the area around a vehicle can help the driver maneuver accurately and can prevent potential accidents. The Code places strict limits on the use of such displays, however. A video display may be used only when the vehicle is motionless or in reverse and only to

monitor the rear view of the vehicle. Since those provisions were enacted, significant improvements in video technology have been made. For instance, Toyota has developed supplementary cameras that can help a driver see on all sides of the vehicle, helping to identify potential hazards that he or she otherwise would be unable to see. This technology is similar to the rear-view cameras currently permitted, but the present language prohibits use of the new system.

Other newly developed devices can warn a driver if another car is too close, or if his or her vehicle is drifting out of its lane. Those safety features are designed to be used under normal driving conditions at full speed, and do not meet the current restrictions in the Code. The bill would permit those technologies to be used, while retaining the restriction on other video displays that could distract a driver.

Other states, including Virginia and Louisiana, have enacted legislation to permit the use of video displays to enhance a driver's view for the purpose of maneuvering the vehicle. Michigan, as a historical leader in automotive development, should adopt similar language to allow the implementation of these recent advances in safety technology. By permitting the new devices, the bill could prevent accidents that otherwise would result in injury, death, or property damage.

Legislative Analyst: Curtis Walker

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The bill would have a minimal fiscal impact on State and local government. The bill would broaden the types of video displays permitted in motor vehicles. To the extent that this would lead to a decline in the number of people found responsible for civil infractions, the State would see a small decrease in revenue. There are no data to indicate the number of violations of this section of the Michigan Vehicle Code. Civil infraction revenue supports public libraries.

Fiscal Analyst: Stephanie Yu

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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.