

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2013 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 173 (Charles County Delegation)  
Environmental Matters

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Vehicle Laws - Charles County - Golf Cart Zones

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This bill authorizes local authorities in Charles County to designate golf cart zones on county highways and operate and maintain these zones.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** The bill is not anticipated to materially affect State operations or finances.

**Local Effect:** Charles County expenditures increase minimally to procure and install additional signs indicating the location of golf cart zones. Revenues are not affected.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** The Maryland Vehicle Law does not prevent a local authority from exercising specified powers as to highways under its jurisdiction. Included among these is the power to designate crossings on Allegany County highways where a person operating a golf cart may cross a highway for continued access to a golf course. Other specified powers include designating portions of highways for snowmobiles to travel for the purpose of accessing snowmobile trails, as well as the power to restrict the use of low-speed vehicles (LSVs) on highways.

**Background:** In October 2011, the Charles County Commission adopted a resolution to implement a 12-month pilot program to study the use of LSVs and facilitate recommendations for “green transportation.” Subsequently, Cobb Island was designated as the study zone for the pilot program. Following completion of the pilot program, the

Charles County Sheriff's Office noted that there were no infractions recorded, and the Charles County Department of Emergency Services recorded no traffic incidents. Based on the results of the pilot program, the Department of Emergency Services recommended that legislation be introduced to authorize the local designation and administration of golf cart zones.

LSVs, also sometimes called neighborhood electric vehicles, are generally regarded as appropriate for communities that accommodate slow-speed traffic. In fact, some golf club and retirement communities are designed to encourage their use. The Maryland Vehicle Law restricts the use of LSVs, including prohibiting a person from driving a LSV on a highway for which the posted maximum speed limit exceeds 30 miles per hour and across a highway for which the posted maximum speed limit exceeds 45 miles per hour, except at an intersection that is controlled by a traffic control signal or a stop sign at each approach to the intersection. The Motor Vehicle Administration has adopted regulatory restrictions and safety standards for LSVs.

**Additional Comments:** Golf carts and LSVs are different types of vehicles. Golf carts traditionally cannot attain speeds of greater than 15 miles per hour. The bill does not specify whether golf carts, LSVs, or both may be permitted within golf cart zones.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Charles County, Department of State Police, Maryland Department of Transportation, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 14, 2013  
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