

Annual Report to the Maryland General Assembly

regarding

The Effect of the Use of Permits Issued to Plug-In Vehicles
on the Operation of HOV Lanes

(Senate Bill 602/House Bill 674, Chapters 492 and 491, Acts of 2010)



by
Motor Vehicle Administration
and
State Highway Administration
Maryland Department of Transportation

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This is the second annual report prepared in accordance with Senate Bill 602/House Bill 674, Chapters 492 and 491, Acts of 2010, which specifically directs:

“(D) On or before January 1 of each year, the Administration and the State Highway Administration jointly shall report to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2–1246 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly on the effect of the use of the plug-in vehicle permits issued under this section on the operation of HOV lanes in the State.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2010. It shall remain effective for a period of 3 years and, at the end of September 30, 2013, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.”

Introduction

Senate Bill 602/House Bill 674, Chapters 492 and 491 of the Acts of 2010 added § 25-108 to the Transportation Article. This new section defines a plug-in vehicle (PIV); authorizes the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA), for an annual fee not exceeding \$20, to issue permits to these vehicles that allow them to use designated High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes at any time regardless of the number of vehicle occupants; authorizes MVA, upon a recommendation from the State Highway Administration (SHA), to limit the number of permits issued so as to ensure HOV lane operations are not degraded to an unacceptable level; and requires MVA and SHA annually to report on the effect of the use of the PIVs on the operation of the HOV lanes. The law became effective October 1, 2010 and, without further legislative action, will sunset on September 30, 2013.

Plug In-Vehicles

A PIV, as defined in TR § 25-108, must have the following characteristics and/or capabilities:

- Is made by a manufacturer;
- Is manufactured primarily for use on public streets, roads, and highways;
- Has not been modified from original manufacturer specifications;
- Is rated at not more than 8,500 pounds unloaded gross vehicle weight;
- Has a maximum speed capability of at least 65 miles per hour; and
- Is propelled to a significant extent by an electric motor that draws electricity from a battery that:
 - has a capacity of not less than 4 kilowatt-hours for 4-wheeled motor vehicles and not less than 2.5 kilowatt-hours for 2-wheeled or 3-wheeled motor vehicles; and
 - is capable of being recharged from an external source of electricity.

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According to the non-profit organization, Plug In America, almost all major vehicle manufacturers and many smaller ones are producing or developing a type of PIV. As of the end of September 2011, its web site reported that some 133 models of cars, vans, trucks, buses, and motorcycles are being produced or are under development, including 12 small car models and 25 models of trucks, buses, and cycles currently available in the U.S.

Maryland HOV Lanes

The use of Maryland's HOV lanes during designated hours is restricted to motorcycles, vehicles carrying at least two occupants, and, as of October 1, 2010, PIVs displaying a permit/decal issued by MVA. In Maryland, the following highways are designated as HOV lanes:

- I-270 southbound from 0.2 miles south of West Diamond Avenue (MD 117) to the Capital Beltway (I-495), including the I-270 Spur, during the hours from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.;
- I-270 northbound from the Capital Beltway (I-495) to Clarksburg Road (MD 121), including the I-270 Spur, during the hours from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.; and
- US 50 eastbound and westbound from the Capital Beltway (I-495) to Crain Highway (US 301 & MD 3) at all times.

Permits Issued to PIVs

MVA is authorized to issue an HOV permit to a PIV to allow the vehicle to lawfully use an HOV lane within the State at any time and irrespective of the number of occupants in the vehicle. The permit, designed jointly by MVA, SHA, and the Maryland State Police is issued in the form of a 4" by 4" sticker to be affixed to the PIV (shown in the attachment). Although MVA is authorized to charge a fee not to exceed \$20 for the permit/sticker, currently, no fee is charged.

MVA has developed a process to provide HOV stickers to PIV dealerships for them to provide to buyers of PIVs. MVA also maintains a supply of stickers to provide to owners of qualifying vehicles that were not purchased at these dealerships. Each permit expires on September 30, 2013, when the law is scheduled to sunset.

The law allows MVA to limit the number of HOV permits issued to PIVs based on a recommendation from SHA that the use of PIVs in HOV lanes is degrading HOV lane operations to an unacceptable level.

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As of November 1, 2011, 86 HOV permits have been issued for PIVs in Maryland. The following table shows the number of permits issued by calendar year and month.

Month	2010	2011
January		10
February		11
March		3
April		11
May		11
June		10
July		5
August		4
September		9
October	1	11
November	0	
December	0	
Total	1	85

Effect of Plug-In Vehicles on HOV Lanes

Without the need to conduct a formal study, but based on the fact that, as of November 1, 2011, only 86 permits had been issued for PIVs to use HOV lanes, SHA has concluded that the number of vehicles permitted is having no impact on HOV lane operations.

Further Information on Permits

For further information regarding the issuance of permits for PIVs, representatives of MVA can be reached at 410-787-2978.

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Attachment

4 x 4 in



Sample of Plug-In Vehicle HOV Plug-In Vehicle HOV Permit/Decal