



Committee: ENV

Date: 2/25/14

Bill #: HB 1020

Position: LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title: Vehicle Laws – Plug-In Electric Drive
– Reserved Parking Spaces

Explanation: This bill prohibits stopping, standing, or parking a vehicle that is not a plug-in electric drive vehicle in a space that provides access to a plug-in electric drive vehicle recharging station and is marked for the use of plug-in electric drive vehicles. The bill requires that the sign designating a parking space for such vehicles be at least 24 inches high and 30 inches wide, be clearly visible to the driver entering the space, and state that a vehicle parked in violation of the bill may be ticketed or towed at the owner's expense. The bill authorizes a parking facility that is privately owned or owned by a local government to have a vehicle towed if it is in violation of the bill's restriction; any local law authorizing towing from a facility owned by a local government must meet or exceed the standards set forth in the State trespass towing laws.

Comment: Maryland's Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Council (EVIC) offers the following information for the Committee's consideration as it deliberates in HB 1020.

The EVIC appreciates the intent of HB1020 to provide legal authority to owners/operators of electric vehicle service equipment (EVSE) at private and locally owned parking facilities to have someone towed or ticketed that parks in an EV charging station spot if they are not an EV.

HB 1020 allows for the towing of a vehicle that is not connected for recharging purposes to an EV charging station, instead of requiring the EV to be actively charging, seemingly with the intent that the purpose of parking in an EV spot is to charge. Most EV owners are conscientious about this intent and purpose because of the understanding that access to EV charging is a privilege that should be extended to other EV owners. In general, HB 1020 helps to encourage further private investment in installation of EV charging stations and protect those public and private investments by protecting the intended use of the spaces.

One concern does arise with regard to small businesses and how they could be discouraged from adding EV charging stations when they have a limited number of parking spaces available for their customers in general. If there were sufficient access to alternate charging this would be less of a concern.

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Additionally, under HB 1020 a question arises pertaining to an EV charging practice that would allow a third party to remove a charging nozzle from a fully charged vehicle in order to begin charging an EV parked beside it. In fact, smarter installations place the EV charger between parking spots for this type of flexibility. In the absence of valet service to remove cars fully charged, EV owners who agree to swap out the nozzle to the next vehicle could be penalized (towed) under HB 1020 for completing their charge without being able to move the vehicle doing so. For example, EV owners that park at an EV spot at the BWI parking garage or other long-term parking facilities could face this dilemma.

One approach in addressing these types of concerns and questions is to take into consideration the concept of “EV etiquette” and that it is continuing to evolve. By focusing on improving EV charging station installations and making room for Level 1 and Level 2 chargers, EV owners/drivers could choose which mode is best for their need at the time and encourage other services, practices and technologies that accommodate better charging practices.

Furthermore, under HB 1020 the required size of the sign is exceedingly large; much larger than the standards in the Federal Highway Administration’s Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and larger than the standard parking signs of some local jurisdictions. This could in turn make the signs more expensive to produce.

Lastly, HB 1020 inserts a new section of law, §21.1007.1, at the end of 21.1007 which pertains to “unobstructed entrances for individuals with disabilities”; so there is some concern that this is not the appropriate section to which to add plug-in electric vehicle parking space requirements and prohibitions.

The Council has also reviewed the issue of protected parking for plug-in electric vehicles over the past two sessions and has historically raised the concern of authorizing local law enforcement to issue tickets for this prohibition; the Council would want to avoid creating any backlash against EV owners by giving them something “special” that other drivers do not get.

The EVIC respectfully requests that the Committee consider the above information as it deliberates on HB 1020.