OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

www.lsc.ohio.gov

Office of Research and Drafting

Legislative Budget Office

S.B. 280
136th General Assembly

Bill Analysis

Click here for S.B. 280's Fiscal Note

Version: As Reported by Senate Transportation

Primary Sponsor: Sen. Johnson

Margaret E. Marcy, Attorney

SUMMARY

- Allows the owner of a high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle (colloquially, a "Humvee") that was manufactured for military purposes to register the vehicle either for general transportation and operation on public roads and highways or for limited transportation related to participation in club activities, exhibitions, tours, parades, and similar uses.
- Requires a Humvee owner who wishes to operate the vehicle for general transportation to take numerous steps to ensure that it is safe for on-road operation, including passing a vehicle inspection, obtaining a certificate of title, ensuring the vehicle is insured, and registering the vehicle as a passenger car.
- Requires a Humvee owner who wishes to operate the vehicle for limited transportation to obtain a certificate of title and register the vehicle in a manner that is similar to a historical motor vehicle.
- Establishes procedures for the registration, titling, and inspection of Humvees.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Humvees on highways

The bill allows a person who owns a high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle (colloquially, a "Humvee") that was manufactured for military purposes to register the vehicle for either general or limited transportation purposes. If the owner wishes to operate the Humvee for general transportation on any public road or highway, then the owner must take steps to ensure that the Humvee meets registration, title, and equipment requirements that are expected from most vehicles used for general transportation (detailed below under "**General transportation**"). If, however, the owner wishes to use the Humvee for limited purposes, such as participation in club activities, exhibitions, tours, parades, and similar uses, then the

owner must follow a more limited procedure for registration that is similar to the process under current law for historical motor vehicles (detailed below under "**Limited transportation**").[1]

Under current federal law, when Humvees are retired from military service and subsequently purchased, the federal government issues the new owner a federal certificate of title that clearly states in red letters at the top of the title "OFF-ROAD USE ONLY." Thus, owners are aware upon purchase that Humvees are prohibited from use on public roads generally, unless the owners take steps to make the vehicles safe for on-road use and the resident state has authorized such use. Military surplus vehicles (like Humvees) were never subject to the federal emissions and manufacturing standards of most vehicles, and thus, making them safe for the roads and highways requires some modification.[2]

General transportation

A Humvee owner who wishes to use the Humvee for general transportation must do the following:

1. Ensure that the Humvee is modified to be in safe operating condition and that its equipment conforms to the Vehicle Equipment Law so that it can pass an Ohio State Highway Patrol vehicle inspection;
2. Ensure that the Humvee is covered by and included in the owner's proof of financial responsibility (e.g., automobile insurance policy);
3. Obtain a certificate of title that meets the requirements necessary to remove the "OFF-ROAD USE ONLY" designation from the title; and
4. Register the vehicle as a passenger car, including paying all necessary registration taxes and fees.[3]

Vehicle equipment and inspection

The first step for the Humvee owner is modifying the vehicle's equipment to be safe for on-road use. While the federal government has supremacy over most vehicle equipment regulations, the Vehicle Equipment Law prohibits a person from driving, moving, causing, or knowingly permitting a vehicle to be driven or moved on any highway when the vehicle is in an unsafe condition and will endanger others. The Ohio State Highway Patrol may inspect brakes, lights, turn signals, steering, horns and warning devices, glass, mirrors, the exhaust system, windshield wipers, tires, and any other equipment specified under its rules to ensure that the vehicle is safe.[4] The bill requires the general transportation Humvees to be modified and then

[1] R.C. 4501.01(KKK) and 4503.184.

[2] 49 Code of Federal Regulations § 571.7.

[3] R.C. 4503.184(A).

[4] R.C. 4513.02(A) and (B).

inspected and given an inspection report by the Patrol certifying the safety of the Humvee prior to the issuance of either a certificate of title or registration.[5]

Certificate of title

Once inspected and after receiving an inspection report certifying that the Humvee meets the proper vehicle equipment requirements, the owner must apply to the clerk of a court of common pleas for a certificate of title for the Humvee that removes the "OFF-ROAD USE ONLY" designation. Upon submission of a completed application, presentation of the inspection report, surrender of any existing certificate of title, and payment of the $18 certificate of title fee, the clerk must issue the owner the new certificate of title. If the owner is applying for a subsequent, duplicate, or a memorandum certificate of title for a Humvee that previously had the "OFF-ROAD USE ONLY" designation removed (either in Ohio or in another state), the subsequent, duplicate, or memorandum must be identical to the prior certificate and have that designation also removed.[6]

The clerk must use reasonable care in issuing the certificate of title but is not liable for any errors or omissions made either by the clerk, the clerk's deputies, or the Automated Title Processing System. The Registrar of Motor Vehicles must determine the format of the certificate of title and placement of the information on it (i.e., the make, model, and model year of the Humvee). Additionally, the Registrar must ensure that any certificate of title, including any subsequent, duplicate, or memorandum certificate of title, complies with the correct formatting and properly removes the "OFF-ROAD USE ONLY" designation, if applicable.[7]

Registration

After obtaining a certificate of title that removes the "OFF-ROAD USE ONLY" designation, the Humvee owner must register the Humvee annually in accordance with the procedures for registering a passenger car and pay the associated registration costs. However, the owner does not need to specify the Humvee's weight.[8] The registration costs include a $20 registration tax, $16 Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) fee, $8 deputy registrar/BMV service fee, and any local motor vehicle taxes (which range between $0 to $30). Additionally, the owner must affirm that the Humvee will be covered by some form of proof of financial responsibility for the entire period of its registration.[9] Once registered, the owner will receive a license plate and may operate the Humvee on any road or highway in the same manner as any other vehicle.

[5] R.C. 4505.111(A)(2).

[6] R.C. 4505.073(A) and (C) and 4505.08(B)(5).

[7] R.C. 4505.073(D) and (E).

[8] R.C. 4503.184(A)(1)(b) and (C).

[9] R.C. 4503.038, 4503.04, 4503.10, 4509.101, and R.C. Chapter 4504, not in the bill.

Limited transportation

Registration and certificate of title

A Humvee owner who wishes to use the Humvee for only limited transportation purposes (i.e., participation in club activities, exhibitions, tours, parades, similar uses, and travel to and from its maintenance locations) must do the following:

1. Obtain a certificate of title from a clerk of the court of common pleas that retains the "OFF-ROAD USE ONLY" designation;
2. Register the Humvee on a form and in the manner prescribed by the Registrar;
3. Pay a $10 fee in lieu of the annual license tax normally required at registration (to be deposited into the existing Public Safety – Highway Purposes Fund); and
4. Execute an affidavit that specifies that the owner will not operate the vehicle for general transportation and will only operate it for the limited purposes (i.e., exhibitions, parades, etc.).[10]

A Humvee owner who titles and registers the vehicle in accordance with these procedures is prohibited from operating that Humvee as a form of general transportation. The owner must keep the registration certificate in the Humvee at all times of operation.[11]

While not required, the owner may request the Ohio State Highway Patrol to inspect the Humvee; and if requested, the Patrol must inspect the vehicle.[12] Additionally, related to the certificates of the title, the procedures that apply to general transportation Humvees that require the clerk to use reasonable care, the Registrar to format the title, and the Registrar to ensure that subsequent, duplicate, and memorandum certificates of title comply with the correct formatting also apply to limited transportation Humvees. However, the Registrar must ensure that the limited registration Humvees retain the "OFF-ROAD USE ONLY" designation.[13]

Painted registration numbers

Under the Historical Motor Vehicle Registration Law, motor vehicles that were originally manufactured for military purposes may have their assigned registration number painted on the front and rear of the vehicle, as an alternative to displaying a license plate.[14] The bill requires the same for the Humvees registered for limited transportation purposes (contrasting them with the general transportation Humvees). The number must be painted in a color that contrasts clearly with the color of the vehicle and must always be legible and visible. If the owner sells the vehicle,

[10] R.C. 4503.184(B) and 4505.073(B).

[11] R.C. 4503.184(B).

[12] R.C. 4505.111(A)(3).

[13] R.C. 4505.073(C), (D), and (E) and 4505.08(B)(5).

[14] R.C. 4503.181, not in the bill.

that registration number must be removed or obliterated so that the new owner can receive a new number (similar to a new owner receiving new license plates).[15]

After the initial registration, the owner of a Humvee registered for limited transportation does not need to renew the registration until the vehicle is transferred or sold to a new owner. At that time, a new registration is required for the vehicle.[16]

Equipment exemption

Unlike a general transportation Humvee, a limited transportation Humvee is exempt from the general Vehicle Equipment Law and the state and local emission, noise control, and fuel usage laws and rules.[17] The bill expressly states that no person can be prohibited from owning or operating a Humvee that is properly registered for limited transportation purposes that:

- Is equipped with a feature of design, type of material, or article of equipment that meets the U.S. Department of Defense equipment standards for its year of manufacture;
- Fails to comply with the Ohio Vehicle Equipment Law and its related rules; and
- Fails to comply with an emission, noise control, or fuel usage provision within either state or local laws and rules.[18]

HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	10-07-25
Reported, S. Transportation	04-15-26

ANSB0280RS-136/ar

[15] R.C. 4503.184(B)(4).

[16] R.C. 4503.184(B)(3).

[17] R.C. 4513.02.

[18] R.C. 4513.381.