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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

### **sHB 5204**

#### ***AN ACT CONCERNING THE OPERATION OF LOW-SPEED VEHICLES.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill generally allows the operation of “low-speed vehicles” (LSV) on highways (i.e., public roads) in the state with speed limits of 25 mph or less. Under the bill and federal regulations, an LSV is a four-wheeled motor vehicle that has a (1) speed attainable in one mile of more than 20 mph but not more than 25 mph on a paved, level surface and (2) gross vehicle weight rating of 3,000 pounds or less.

Under the bill, LSVs are “motor vehicles” under state motor vehicle laws (i.e., Title 14 of the General Statutes). This means, among other things, that LSVs must be registered, titled, and insured; their drivers must hold a valid driver’s license; and businesses selling or repairing them must hold dealer or repairer licenses, respectively. Currently, the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) does not register LSVs, and they may not be driven on public roads. The bill prohibits DMV from issuing a title for a homemade LSV or a golf cart that has been retrofitted from the original manufacturer’s specifications in an attempt to qualify as an LSV.

The bill allows the Office of the State Traffic Administration and local traffic authorities to prohibit or limit LSV use on roads under their jurisdictions. It also requires that LSVs meet state motor vehicle equipment standards except for those that are inapplicable to or inconsistent with the federal motor vehicle safety standards for LSVs. Violations of the road restrictions or equipment requirements are infractions (see BACKGROUND).

Lastly, the bill makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2024

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Infractions***

Infractions are punishable by fines, usually set by Superior Court judges, of between \$35 and \$90, plus a \$20 or \$35 surcharge and an additional fee based on the amount of the fine. There may be other added charges depending upon the type of infraction. For example, certain motor vehicle infractions trigger a Special Transportation Fund surcharge of 50% of the fine. An infraction is not a crime, and violators can pay the fine by mail without making a court appearance.

### ***Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards for LSVs***

Under federal regulations, LSVs must satisfy certain requirements under specified testing conditions and be equipped with the following:

1. headlights, turn signals, tail lights, and brake lights;
2. reflex reflectors;
3. an exterior mirror on the driver's side and either an exterior mirror on the passenger's side or an interior mirror (in addition to meeting other specified rear visibility requirements);
4. a parking brake;
5. a windshield meeting federal standards on glazing materials;
6. a vehicle identification number (VIN) meeting federal requirements;
7. a seatbelt assembly meeting federal requirements; and
8. a pedestrian alert sound (i.e., noise that certain electric and hybrid vehicles must make at speeds less than 18.6 mph that pedestrians can hear over background noises) (49 C.F.R. § 571.500).

## **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Transportation Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 35 Nay 0 (03/20/2024)