


Government of the District of Columbia
Office of the Chief Financial Officer



Fitzroy Lee
Acting Chief Financial Officer

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Phil Mendelson
Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia

FROM: Fitzroy Lee 
Acting Chief Financial Officer

DATE: March 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Fiscal Impact Statement – Removal and Disposition of Abandoned and
Other Unlawfully Parked Vehicles Reform Act of 2022

REFERENCE: Bill 24-302, Committee Print as provided to the Office of Revenue
Analysis on March 6, 2022

Conclusion

Funds are sufficient in the fiscal year 2022 through fiscal year 2025 budget and financial plan to implement the bill.

Background

The Department of Public Works (DPW) enforces the District's laws governing abandoned and dangerous vehicles located in public space or on private property. If a resident submits a service request about a vehicle that they believe is abandoned or dangerous, DPW will send out an investigator to determine if it meets the legal criteria. If a vehicle has been in public space for over 48 hours or on private space for over 30 days, DPW can remove the abandoned vehicle after 48-hour notice if it also meets two of the following criteria: the vehicle is extensively damaged, the vehicle is inoperable, the vehicle is a harborage for various pests, or the vehicle does not display valid tags or registration stickers. When an investigator determines that a vehicle is dangerous, meaning that it poses an imminent threat to public health, safety, or welfare, DPW can immediately remove the vehicle.

The bill amends the definition of abandoned vehicles to make it easier to remove abandoned vehicles from public space. Under the bill, a DPW investigator will only need to determine that a vehicle meets one of the criteria for being an abandoned vehicle before it can be towed. It also removes from the criteria the option that a vehicle be extensively damaged and redefines invalid tags or registration as

being expired for over one year.¹ The bill redefines a dangerous vehicle to include vehicles that, for a period of at least 24 hours, are extensively damaged or pose an imminent threat to public health, safety, or welfare.

The bill also creates an affirmative defense for an individual who illegally parks or stores an abandoned or dangerous vehicle on public space² if the individual has filed a report with the Metropolitan Police Department or the vehicle owner's insurance company. The bill eliminates the potential penalty of imprisonment for a repeat offender of parking an abandoned or dangerous vehicle in public space in favor of a fine of up to \$500.

Financial Plan Impact

Funds are sufficient in the fiscal year 2022 through fiscal year 2025 budget and financial plan to implement the bill. DPW receives over 18,000 requests annually to investigate abandoned and dangerous vehicles and tows approximately 2,000 annually. If DPW determines the vehicle is tow-eligible, then the DPW investigator will notify the DPW tow teams who will tow the vehicle to the Blue Plains Impoundment and Storage Facility located on Shepherd Parkway, S.W.

DPW currently investigates over 16,000 vehicles that it does not tow because investigators determine that the vehicles are not legally abandoned or dangerous under the current definitions. The significant number of vehicles that are investigated, but not towed, indicates that residents are not familiar with the legal definitions of abandoned and dangerous vehicles and are requesting investigations of any vehicle they deem to be abandoned or dangerous. It is very likely that many of these vehicles would be newly eligible for tows under the bill's changes, but there is no indication that the bill will create a significant increase in investigations. DPW has a team of six investigators and is currently hiring three to four additional investigators. A team of nine to ten investigators is sufficient to manage the investigative volume and any potential increases in calls. DPW also has 29 tow crews and is in the process of hiring 18 more team members. These tow resources are sufficient to manage the increase in tows with the bill's reduced burden to meet the tow-eligible criteria.

In addition to investigating and towing abandoned and dangerous vehicles, the District manages an impound and storage lot where vehicles are held. The current lot holds over 800 vehicles and is regularly at or near capacity. The District needs to establish a new lot to support what will be an increase in the number of vehicles towed each year. DPW, along with the Department of General Services, has identified a new lot and the funding to lease and operate the lot is included in the agencies' existing budgeted resources.

¹ The bill ensures that the one-year expiration requirement is measured concurrently with the 48-hour and 30-day requirements for a vehicle to be abandoned.

² Removal and Disposal of Abandoned and Other Unlawfully Parked Vehicles Reform Act of 2003, effective October 28, 2003 (D.C. Law 15-35; D.C. Official Code § 50-2421.03(1)).