



Committee: PS/GO
Committee Review: At a future date
Staff: Ludeen McCartney-Green Legislative Attorney
Purpose: To receive testimony – no vote expected

AGENDA ITEM #9
March 24, 2026
Public Hearing

SUBJECT

Expedited 14-26, Motor Vehicle Towing – Redemption of Vehicle - Proof of Ownership or Control
(The Vehicle Recovery Act)

Lead Sponsor: Councilmember Stewart

Co-Sponsors: Council President Fani-González, Councilmembers Friedson, Evans, Glass, Council Vice President Balcombe, and Councilmembers Mink, Jawando, Katz, Luedtke, and Sayles

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

Members of the Public

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

- To receive public testimony

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

Expedited Bill 14-26 would:

- (1) specify procedures governing vehicle redemption;
- (2) require towing companies to accept alternative documentation that establishes ownership or lawful possession;
- (3) establish indemnification requirements associated with vehicle release;
- (4) provide enforcement mechanisms for misconduct related to the release of impounded vehicles; and
- (5) generally amend the law governing motor vehicle towing and immobilization on private property.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- N/A

This report contains:

Staff Report
Expedited Bill 14-26

Pages 1-3
©1-5

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MEMORANDUM

March 19, 2026

TO: County Council

FROM: Ludeen McCartney-Green, Legislative Attorney

SUBJECT: **Public Hearing:** Expedited Bill 14-26 - Motor Vehicle Towing – Redemption of Vehicle - Proof of Ownership or Control (The Vehicle Recovery Act)

Expedited Bill 14-26 - Motor Vehicle Towing – Redemption of Vehicle - Proof of Ownership or Control (The Vehicle Recovery Act) sponsored by Lead Sponsor Councilmember Stewart, and Co-Sponsored by Council President Fani-González, Councilmembers Friedson, Evans, Glass, Council Vice President Balcombe, and Councilmembers Mink, Jawando, Katz, and Luedtke, and, Sayles was on introduced on March 3, 2026. A joint committee worksession is tentatively scheduled for April 15, 2026.

Expedited Bill 14-26 would:

- (1) specify procedures governing vehicle redemption;
- (2) require towing companies to accept alternative documentation that establishes ownership or lawful possession;
- (3) establish indemnification requirements associated with vehicle release;
- (4) provide enforcement mechanisms for misconduct related to the release of impounded vehicles; and
- (5) generally amend the law governing motor vehicle towing and immobilization on private property.

PURPOSE

The purpose of Expedited Bill 14-26 is to specify requirements governing the release of an impounded vehicle to its owner or an authorized non-owner. There has been an increasing number of individuals in the County who have been detained by federal agents, resulting in their vehicles being left in the public right-of-way and subsequently towed. If the registered owner is unavailable, and a family member is not listed on the vehicle title, that family member is often unable to retrieve the vehicle during the period of detention. This has created significant hardship for affected families. The Bill is intended to provide a lawful mechanism for authorized individuals to recover a vehicle in such circumstances while maintaining appropriate safeguards.

BACKGROUND

The County laws regarding impounding and towing vehicles from roads align with the authority given under state law to regulate parking, stopping, and standing. Specifically, Section 26-301 (b) of the Maryland Transportation Article, provides, in part, that "any political subdivision of this State may adopt ordinances or regulations that: (1) regulate the parking of vehicles; (2) provide/or the impounding of vehicles parked in violation of the ordinances or regulations; (3) **regulate the towing of vehicles from publicly owned and privately owned parking lots**; and (4) provide for the issuance of a citation by an officer for a violation of an ordinance or regulation that is adopted under this section."¹ (Emphasis added).

Chapter 30C of the County Code governs the towing or immobilization of motor vehicles on private property without the consent of the vehicle owners. In July 2015, the Council enacted Bill 17-15,² which made several changes to the law to better protect public safety in incidents involving the towing of vehicles without the vehicle's owner's consent.

Furthermore, the County's towing law provided the County Executive with the authority to establish, via regulations, administrative requirements for towing companies, including setting maximum rates, storage of vehicles, payment methods, and towing and recovery. *See*, COMAR 30C.00.02, *Executive Towing Rules and Regulations*.

Currently, under Executive regulations, to redeem an impounded vehicle, the following are acceptable types of documentation to present as proof of ownership or control:³

- tow companies will accept a U.S. or state-government-issued photo ID or a consular registration card from any country approved pursuant to County law and a current registration or current temporary registration card issued to a permanent (metal) registration plate for the release of a vehicle to the owner.
- if the owner of the vehicle is not present, the person requesting release of the vehicle must have a notarized letter from the owner authorizing that particular individual to take custody of the vehicle.
- tow companies will accept, as proof of ownership/control, letters or faxes from insurance companies, lien holders, and rental-car companies.

COMCOR 30C.00.02.03.

Expedited Bill 14-26 seeks to codify existing requirements in regulations regarding an owner redeeming their vehicle and to expand the legal authority for the documents that may be used to show proof of control by an authorized non-owner when a vehicle owner is not present.

¹ The County Council has adopted ordinances that (1) regulate parking- Chapter 31; (2) provide for impounding of illegally parked vehicles-*Id*, §§31-9, 31-21, 31-31; (3) regulate towing from public and private parking *lots-Id*, §§31-46 and 31-62; and (4) provide for issuance of a citation-*Id*, §§31-53 and 31-54.

² [Bill 17-15 - Motor Vehicle Towing and Immobilization on Private Property - Amendments](#)

BILL SPECIFICS

Expedited Bill 14-26 establishes standardized procedures to govern the redemption of impounded vehicles. It requires **vehicle owners** to present government-issued identification (including approved consular identification) and proof of current Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration registration to retrieve a vehicle.

The Bill also authorizes release to an **authorized agent** when the owner is not present, upon submission of a notarized authorization letter or documentation from an insurance company, lienholder, or rental car company.

In certain circumstances, where a notarized letter is not provided, a **family or household member** may redeem a vehicle by presenting one form of appropriate identification issued by the U.S. or state government, a foreign government, or a valid nonprofit organization. Along with one document demonstrating shared residence or familial relationship (utility bill, deed, mortgage statement, lease agreement, marriage certificate, or birth certificate).

The Bill requires towing companies to obtain a signed indemnification and hold harmless agreement when releasing a vehicle to a non-owner and prohibits false representations or fraudulent documentation in connection with vehicle redemption. Violations are subject to enforcement under existing County law.

Expedited Bill 14-26 sunsets 4 years after the effective date and would no longer have any full force or effect.

This packet contains:

Expedited Bill 14-26

Circle #

1-5

Expedited Bill No. 14-26
Concerning: Motor Vehicle Towing –
Redemption of Vehicle - Proof of
Ownership or Control (The Vehicle
Recovery Act)
Date: 2/26/2026 Draft No. 3
Introduced: _____
Enacted: _____
Executive: _____
Effective: _____
Sunset Date: _____
Ch. _____, Laws of Mont. Co. _____

COUNTY COUNCIL FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

Lead Sponsor: Councilmember Stewart
Co-Sponsors: Council President Fani-González, Councilmembers Friedson, Evans, Glass, Council
Vice President Balcombe, and Councilmembers Mink, Jawando, Katz, Luedtke, and Sayles

AN EXPEDITED ACT to:

- (1) specify procedures governing vehicle redemption;
- (2) require towing companies to accept alternative documentation that establishes ownership or lawful possession;
- (3) establish indemnification requirements associated with vehicle release;
- (4) provide enforcement mechanisms for misconduct related to the release of impounded vehicles; and
- (5) generally amend the law governing motor vehicle towing and immobilization on private property.

By amending

Montgomery County Code
Chapter 30C, Motor Vehicle Towing and Immobilization on Private Property
Section 30C-2

By adding

Montgomery County Code
Chapter 30C, Motor Vehicle Towing and Immobilization on Private Property
Section 30C-8A

Boldface	<i>Heading or defined term.</i>
<u>Underlining</u>	<i>Added to existing law by original bill.</i>
[Single boldface brackets]	<i>Deleted from existing law by original bill.</i>
<u>Double underlining</u>	<i>Added by amendment.</i>
[[Double boldface brackets]]	<i>Deleted from existing law or the bill by amendment.</i>
* * *	<i>Existing law unaffected by bill.</i>

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following Act:

28 (1) Redemption by owner. To redeem an impounded vehicle, the
 29 vehicle owner must present the following to a towing company:

30 (A) either:

31 (i) a U.S. or state government-issued photo
 32 identification; or

33 (ii) a consular registration card from any country
 34 approved pursuant to Section 2-5; and

35 (B) proof of current vehicle registration issued by the Maryland
 36 Motor Vehicle Administration, including temporary
 37 registration documentation where applicable.

38 (2) Redemption by authorized agent.

39 (A) If the vehicle owner is not present, a vehicle may be released
 40 to an authorized agent upon presentation of:

41 (i) a notarized letter signed by the owner authorizing
 42 release and custody of the vehicle to the named
 43 individual; or

44 (ii) a letter from an insurance company, lienholder, or
 45 rental car company that indicates the agent is entitled
 46 to custody of the vehicle.

47 (B) In lieu of a letter under paragraph (2)(A), a vehicle may be
 48 released to a family member or household member of the
 49 owner upon presentation of:

50 (i) a photo identification issued by:

51 (a) the U.S. or state government;

52 (b) a foreign government; or

53 (c) a valid nonprofit organization registered in the
 54 state of Maryland; and

55 (ii) at least one documentation reasonably establishing
 56 shared residence or familial relationship, which may
 57 include:

58 (a) a utility or service bill, deed, mortgage
 59 statement, or current lease agreement that has
 60 the same residential address as shown for the
 61 registered vehicle;

62 (b) a birth certificate establishing a parent-child
 63 relationship;

64 (c) a marriage certificate; or

65 (d) other documentation deemed sufficient by the
 66 towing company, consistent with County
 67 regulations.

68 (C) Indemnification. A towing company must require, as a
 69 condition of release to a person who is not the vehicle
 70 owner, execution of an indemnification and hold harmless
 71 agreement on a form prescribed by the Office. Such
 72 indemnification must not extend to claims arising from
 73 gross negligence or willful misconduct of the County or
 74 towing company.

75 (D) Prohibited conduct. An authorized agent of a vehicle owner
 76 must not:

77 (A) falsely state that the owner authorized the release of
 78 a particular vehicle; or

79 (B) provide any false or fraudulent information in
 80 connection with redemption.

81 (c) Enforcement. A violation of this Section must constitute a violation
82 subject to enforcement under Section 30C-12.

83 **Sec 2. Expedited Effective Date.** The Council declares that this legislation is
84 necessary for the immediate protection of the public interest. This Act takes effect on
85 the date on which it becomes law.

86 **Sec 3. Sunset.** Section 30C-8A must expire 4 years after its effective date, with
87 no further force or effect of law.