

# HOUSE RESEARCH

## Bill Summary

**FILE NUMBER:** H.F. 712  
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### Overview

This bill changes the structure for regulation of mini trucks, switching from a system of locally authorized permits to drive on certain local roads, to statewide authority for mini truck operation on local roads. Under the statewide system, mini trucks are generally treated the same as other passenger vehicles. For instance, the vehicles are subject to vehicle titling, registration, and license plate requirements; motor vehicle sales tax and registration tax are paid on them; insurance is required; and drivers of mini trucks have the same rights and responsibilities as other motorists. Mini trucks under the bill differ from other autos in their equipment requirements, and they cannot be operated on trunk highways. Counties, cities, and towns can prohibit the vehicles on those roads under their jurisdiction. Except as otherwise noted, the provisions go into effect August 1, 2011.

Under current law, a mini truck is a four wheeled motor vehicle that (1) has an electric motor of up to 7.5 kilowatts or an engine with a displacement of up to 660 cc, (2) has a total dry weight (weighed before any loads or occupants) of 900 to 2,200 pounds, (3) contains an enclosed cabin and seat for the operator, (4) resembles a pickup truck or van, and (5) was not originally manufactured to meet federal safety standards for passenger vehicles (except it can meet the federal low-speed vehicle standard). Minn. Stat. § 169.011, subd. 40a.

- 1 Passenger automobile.** Modifies the definition of "passenger automobile" in the chapter on vehicle registration to include mini trucks. The effects of this change include: (1) making mini trucks subject to the same registration tax as passenger cars and SUVs, (2) making mini trucks subject to the motor vehicle sales tax, and (3) requiring a license plate for the vehicles.
- 2 Mini trucks; certificate required.** Establishes that a certificate title (providing proof of ownership) is required for a mini truck. Prevents issuance of a certificate of a title if the vehicle lacks a vehicle identification number (VIN).
- 3 Special vehicle use on roadway.** Removes mini trucks from a provision that authorizes counties, cities, and towns to adopt ordinances and issue special permits for operating certain vehicles on roads under their jurisdiction. The permit issued by a local unit of government is subject to statutory restrictions and requirements. Makes technical changes.

Mini trucks were added to the special permit authority (which also covers motorized golf carts and certain all-terrain vehicles) in 2009. The bill eliminates special permits for mini trucks, replacing it with a new statewide authorization.

- 4** **Mini trucks.** Authorizes mini trucks to be driven on local roads, subject to various equipment and vehicle operation requirements.
- Subd. 1. Required equipment. Identifies required equipment for mini trucks, including headlamps and taillights, turn signals, rear view mirrors, a windshield, seatbelts, and a parking break.
- Subd. 2. Operation. Establishes driving requirements and restrictions for mini trucks. Restricts mini trucks from being operated on trunk highways (which include U.S. highways and Interstate highways), except to cross the highway when operating as authorized on another road. Requires operation of mini trucks in the most right-hand lane except when making a left turn. Clarifies that a driver's license is required.
- Subd. 3. Restrictions and prohibitions. Authorizes a road authority to limit mini truck on streets and highways under that road authority's jurisdiction. Prevents mini trucks from being able to be used for driver licensing exams.
- 5** **Effective date.** Eliminates a sunset provision, so that a 2009 section of law defining mini trucks is not eliminated.
- Under current law, the special local permit provision for mini truck operation is set to expire July 31, 2012.
- 6** **Mini trucks; cancellation of local permits.** Clarifies implementation of the mini truck law changes, establishing that special permits for mini trucks by local units of government are superceded by the new state law and that persons driving mini trucks on or after August 1, 2011, must meet the new requirements.