

- SUBJECT:** Allowing vehicles towing motorcycle trailers to travel 70 mph
- COMMITTEE:** Transportation — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — Alexander, Edwards, Hamric, Hawley, Hill, Noriega, Uher
0 nays
2 absent — Siebert, Y. Davis
- WITNESSES:** For — None
Against — None
On — Carlos Lopez, Texas Department of Transportation; Lester Mills, Department of Public Safety
- BACKGROUND:** Transportation Code 545.352 allows vehicles towing a trailer that is used to tow a boat less than 26 feet long, or to transport livestock, to travel up to 70 miles per hour (mph) on numbered highways outside urban districts. This particular speed limit was increased to 70 mph by SB 343 by Harris, enacted by the 75th Legislature in 1997. Vehicles towing other trailers, semitrailers, another motor vehicle, or a towable recreational vehicle may travel at a maximum speed limit of 60 mph in daytime and 55 mph at night.
- DIGEST:** HB 1075 would allow a vehicle towing a trailer used primarily to transport a motorcycle to travel up to 70 miles per hour. It also would specify that vehicles towing trailers, other than those specifically exempted, are subject to the 60 mph speed limit during the day and 55 mph at night.
HB 1075 would take effect September 1, 1999.
- SUPPORTERS SAY:** HB 1075 simply would put trailers hauling motorcycles in the same class as boat and livestock trailers. Studies have shown that allowing more vehicles to travel at the same speed on the road reduces the risk of accidents. Most accidents occur when vehicles are traveling at different speeds. Additionally, recent reports of traffic fatalities by the Department of Public Safety show that traffic fatalities have declined, even with 70 mph speed limits.

Drivers of many vehicles towing trailers with motorcycles already are traveling at this speed, unaware that they may not lawfully drive as fast as people hauling pleasure boats or livestock trailers. There is no logical reason for making a distinction between trailers of similar size and function, which leads to drivers inadvertently violating the law.

The cost of sign changes to reflect this change could be reduced for this legislation if other legislation is enacted that also would require changing speed limit signs. It would cost \$424,000 to make all changes to speed limit signs required by the 76th Legislature.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

When speed limits were increased to 70 mph in 1996, traffic-related fatalities increased by 18 percent. While traffic fatalities decreased in 1997, the number of fatalities remains higher than the level when the speed limit was lower. Allowing any vehicles to increase speed could lead to additional traffic deaths.

OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:

HB 1075 should not be limited to motorcycles but should include all recreational vehicles under a certain length.

NOTES:

According to the fiscal note, it would cost approximately \$424,000 from State Highway Fund 006 to make changes to speed limit signs to reflect the speed limit changes proposed in HB 1075.

A related bill, SB 349 by Nixon, which would allow trailers towing recreational vehicles less than 20 feet in length to travel up to 70 mph, has been referred to the Senate State Affairs Subcommittee on Infrastructure.