

SUBJECT: Increasing the daytime maximum speed limit to 75 mph on rural highways

COMMITTEE: Transportation — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 8 ayes — Alexander, Siebert, Y. Davis, Edwards, Hamric, Hill, Noriega, Uher

0 nays

1 absent — Hawley

WITNESSES: For — None

Against — None

On — Carlos Lopez, Texas Department of Transportation

DIGEST: HB 3328 would amend the Transportation Code to allow the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to increase the daytime maximum speed limit on certain rural highways to 75 miles per hour. State and federal highways outside urban districts that have a daytime maximum speed limit of 70 miles per hour would be eligible for the increase. The increase would take effect only if TxDOT determined that the increase was appropriate for the highway or portion of the highway. The increase would apply only to passenger cars, motorcycles, cars and light trucks towing trailers less than 26 feet long, and cars and light trucks towing trailers designed and used to transport livestock.

SUPPORTERS SAY: The rural highway speed limit could be raised throughout the state, especially in sparsely populated rural areas, without compromising safety. Many who drive several hours per day for routine activities are concerned with saving time on the road. HB 3328 would enable citizens to save considerable time traveling over long distances.

Ten other western states, including Oklahoma and New Mexico, have adopted the 75-mile-per-hour rural highway speed limit. Citizens in these states strongly support the 75-mile-per-hour limit, and no evidence of an increase in traffic accidents, injuries, or fatalities has been reported.

HB 3328 would not adversely affect the safety of highway drivers. TxDOT would review carefully every request to increase the speed limit to ensure that the highway in question was safe enough for this to occur. The bill would not cost the state any additional money. TxDOT estimates that the cost to the department of raising the speed limit would be negligible. The speed limit for other vehicles such as large trucks and school buses would not be affected.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

HB 3328 could lead to more accidents, injuries, and fatalities on Texas highways. Faster vehicles are harder to control and cause greater damage when accidents occur. Permitting speeds of 75 miles per hour on these highways could encourage unsafe driving on highways unaffected by the increase. Raising the speed limit also could lead to greater fuel consumption, since automobile fuel efficiency decreases at higher speeds.