

SUBJECT: Authority for crossing guards to direct traffic in school crossing zones

COMMITTEE: Transportation — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Siebert, Y. Davis, Edwards, Hamric, Hill, Noriega, Uher
0 nays
2 absent — Alexander, Hawley

WITNESSES: For — Robert Chapa and Hector Rodriguez, Laredo United Independent School District
Against — None
On — Carlos Lopez, Texas Department of Transportation

BACKGROUND: Transportation Code, sec. 542.501 allows school crossing guards to direct traffic in designated school crosswalks when pedestrians are crossing the street. Transportation Code, sec. 541.302(13) defines a school crossing zone as a zone designated by a local authority with reduced speed limits during school hours.

DIGEST: CSHB 964 would allow school crossing guards to enforce traffic laws in school crossing zones, including areas outside of the designated crosswalks, whether or not any pedestrians were crossing the street. Crossing guards would have to complete a traffic direction training program based on the curriculum requirements for basic peace officer courses established by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education. Crossing guards would not be certified as peace officers and would not be allowed to carry weapons while directing traffic.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house.

SUPPORTERS SAY: School officials need an inexpensive option for directing traffic near schools to make sure that traffic flows smoothly on crowded streets where children are likely to cross. However, crossing guards are not allowed to direct traffic

on busy streets near schools in areas outside a school crosswalk. They may direct traffic only if pedestrians are crossing.

Some school districts spend thousands of dollars to hire certified peace officers to direct traffic on busy streets. Other districts cannot afford to hire officers or may not be able to find officers to direct traffic.

Crossing guards could enforce traffic laws only within a restricted area, and only those guards who have completed state-approved training could have this authority. Using trained crossing guards to direct traffic near schools would improve the safety of children crossing busy streets, as well as the management of traffic around schools.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No apparent opposition.

NOTES:

The committee substitute would require that a traffic direction training program for school crossing guards follow the basic peace officer course curriculum.