

SUBJECT: Safety requirements for construction and maintenance work zones

COMMITTEE: Transportation — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 12 ayes — Pickett, Martinez, Burkett, Y. Davis, Fletcher, Harless, Israel, McClendon, Murr, Paddie, Phillips, Simmons

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — Sarah Roth; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Fred Shannon, Texas Association of Manufacturers; Ian Randolph, Texas Transportation Association; Joseph Roth)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Eddie Solis, City of Arlington)

On — Robert Bass, County Judges and Commissioners of Texas; Stuart Corder, Harris County Engineering; (*Registered, but did not testify*: William Diggs, Texas DPS; John Barton, James Bass, and Bill Hale, TxDOT)

BACKGROUND: Transportation Code, sec. 542.404 specifies fines for violations in highway construction and maintenance work zones. Ch. 545, subch. H governs speed restrictions under various circumstances.

Highway work zones are considered dangerous because lanes are re-routed to have traffic move in opposite directions on the same strip of pavement. Currently, there is no requirement to separate directions of travel in work zones on Texas highways. Speeding in these areas can lead to tragedies, such as head-on collisions in highway work zones.

DIGEST: CSHB 1238 would require entities that established a construction or maintenance work zone to install physical barriers that separated lanes with traffic traveling in opposite directions. Signs designating such a work zone would indicate that it was a construction or maintenance work zone, indicate its beginning and end, and state that fines would double when workers were present.

CSHB 1238 also would lower speed limits in construction or maintenance work zones to 20 miles per hour less than the normal speed limit on that road. The minimum and maximum fines for violating this speed limit in a work zone where workers were present would be double the usual minimum and maximum fines for that offense. The entity responsible for speed-limit signs on that road would be responsible for installing signs indicating the lower speed limit.

The lower speed limit and sign requirements would not apply to roads in work zones that had two directions of traffic and were divided into three or more lanes in each direction or roads with a speed limit of 35 miles per hour or less.

CSHB 1238 would take effect September 1, 2015.