

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.H.B. 2204
By: Pickett (Watson)
Transportation
5/17/2013
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Regulating traffic flow through the use of variable speed limits has been shown to promote a smoother, safer flow of traffic and can be used to provide protection in maintenance work zones.

The Texas Transportation Commission (TTC) currently lacks the authority to establish variable speed limits, which are used to lower speed limits in response to conditions like adverse weather, congestion, work zones, and traffic incidents.

C.S.H.B. 2204 seeks to improve safety and operational efficiency in areas of reduced road capacity and reduce the possibility of primary and secondary traffic crashes by providing TTC the authority to establish variable speed limits.

C.S.H.B. 2204 amends current law relating to the establishment of a variable speed limit pilot program by the Texas Transportation Commission.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Transportation Commission in SECTION 2 of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. DEFINITIONS. Defines “commission” and “department” in this Act.

SECTION 2. VARIABLE SPEED LIMIT PILOT PROGRAM. (a) Requires the Texas Transportation Commission (TTC) by rule to establish and requires the Texas Department Transportation (TxDOT) to implement a variable speed limit pilot program to study the effectiveness of temporarily lowering prima facie speed limits to address inclement weather, congestion, road construction, or any other condition that affects the safe and orderly movement of traffic on a roadway. Authorizes notice of a speed limit establishment under the pilot program to be displayed using a stationary or portable changeable message sign, as defined by Section 544.013 (Changeable Message Sign System), Transportation Code.

(b) Requires TTC to select up to three locations to test the pilot program.

(c) Requires TTC to inform the Department of Public Safety of the State of Texas (DPS) and any affected local law enforcement agency about the pilot program and the locations that are being used to test the pilot program.

(d) Provides that a speed limit that is established under the program is required to be based on an engineering and traffic investigation, is authorized to be effective for all or a designated portion of the highway and may be effective for any period of the day or night, as DPS acting directly or through its authorized officers and agents (department) determines necessary, and is effective only when the speed limit is posted and only if a sign notifying motorists of the change in speed limit is posted not less than 500 feet but not more than 1,000 feet before the point at which the speed limit begins.

SECTION 3. REPORT. Requires TTC, not later than December 1, 2014, to submit a report to the legislature that includes information about the pilot program, the results of the pilot program, and any recommendations for statutory changes based on the results of the pilot program.

SECTION 4. EXPIRATION. Provides that this Act expires February 1, 2015.

SECTION 5. EFFECTIVE DATE. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2013.