

REVENUE: No revenue impact
FISCAL: Minimal fiscal impact, no statement issued

Action: Do Pass
Vote: 3 - 1 - 1
Yeas: Monnes Anderson, Starr, Metsger
Nays: George L.
Exc.: Deckert
Prepared By: Janet Adkins, Administrator
Meeting Dates: 5/3

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Extends requirement to wear safety belts to drivers of certain commercial vehicles designed or used for transportation of property who are currently exempt.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Safety concerns for drivers and passengers of the exempt vehicles
- Liability and Workers' Compensation rates for businesses
- Vans, passenger vehicles and pickup trucks used for commercial transport of property
- Support of Oregon Trucking Association

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: No amendment.

BACKGROUND: According to the Department of Transportation, since the passage of the 1990 adult safety belt law, Oregon's crash injury and fatality rates have dropped 43 percent and belt use has doubled to 97 percent compliance. An exemption from the law for commercial vehicles was part of an original list of exemptions adopted by the 1983 Legislature. A review by the Attorney General's Office in 2000 indicated that Oregon's original seat belt laws gave priority to protecting child passengers, and that commercial vehicles were exempted as unlikely to transport children. Oregon's safety belt law was broadened in 1990 with passage of the adult belt law, and currently all passenger vehicle occupants are required to use a safety belt or child restraint system unless exempted by law. Drivers of large trucks became subject to state safety belt laws in 2003. Following a fatality accident, the 2005 Oregon Legislature removed an exemption for privately-owned vehicles that transport persons for a fee, such as cabs, shuttles carrying 15 or fewer passengers, vans, and limousines. A remaining exemption applies to privately-owned commercial vehicles designed or used primarily to transport property. This exemption applies to pickups over 10,000 pounds and also includes such vehicles as delivery trucks, vans, and even small cars that are used for local deliveries. Law enforcement officials may not visually be able to determine which of these vehicles is currently exempt and the rationale for exemption is considered questionable. Many larger companies already require drivers to wear safety belts and their use is required of all Commercial Driver License holders.

House Bill 2275 removes the exemption from safety belt requirements for vehicles designed or used to transport property.