

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: Minimal fiscal impact, no statement issued

Action: Do Pass as Amended and Be Printed Engrossed

Vote: 4 - 0 - 1

Yeas: George L., Monnes Anderson, Starr, Metsger

Nays: 0

Exc.: Deckert

Prepared By: Janet Adkins, Administrator

Meeting Dates: 3/28, 3/29

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Requires the Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District (TriMet) to commission an independent study of pedestrian crossings on its light rail system and to make recommendations regarding safety at crossings.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- TriMet's safety strategies and emphasis, previous studies and recommendations
- Federal requirements
- Causes of light rail collisions
- Example of Aaron Sturdy's bicycle train collision
- Whether pedestrian accidents are more prevalent on the older, eastside MAX line
- Why light rail vehicle and pedestrian accident information is not more accessible
- Crossing gates generally advisable in higher train speed areas with limited sight distance

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: Replaces the original measure, which would have required installation of crossing gates at all unguarded pedestrian crossings on the light rail system by January of 2009.

BACKGROUND: TriMet's light rail system in the Portland Metropolitan area consists of track connecting Gresham, Portland, the Portland Airport, Beaverton, and Hillsboro. The 33-mile Blue Line extends from Gresham to Hillsboro, the 5.5-mile Red Line runs from Gateway to the airport, and the Yellow Line spans 7.2 miles from the Exposition Center to downtown Portland. The lines share tracks downtown and between Gateway and downtown. Trains typically run every 5-15 minutes, generally between 4:30 a.m. and midnight.

According to TriMet there are 362 pedestrian crossings on the MAX system, 12 with pedestrian gates, 54 adjacent to automatic vehicle gates, and 216 with traffic signals or other warning devices. Other forms of protection include signage and tactile strips. The system meets federal safety requirements and has a better than average safety record compared to light rail systems nationally. Even with the specialized safety engineering and warning devices, pedestrian and bicyclist injuries and deaths have occurred as a result of collisions with light rail trains. Since the first line opened in 1986, 19 pedestrians and bicyclists have died as a result of light rail train collisions. Of those fatalities, three occurred at gated crossings, three occurred at un-gated crossings, three occurred at station platforms, and ten occurred in exclusive (restricted) right of way. Of the 19 fatalities, 12 were considered trespassing and two were considered suicides. Drugs and or alcohol were involved in six of the 17 non-suicide fatalities.

Aaron Wagner Sturdy was killed on his bicycle at a Gresham crossing on June 23, 2003. His family requested Senate Bill 829 to require additional crossing gates at pedestrian crossings to help prevent further collisions.

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This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.