

REVENUE:

FISCAL:

SUBSEQUENT REFERRAL TO:

Action:

Vote:

Yeas:

Nays:

Exc.:

Prepared By: James LaBar, Administrator

Meeting Dates: 4/15, 4/20

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Increases interstate highway speed limit to 70 miles per hour for most vehicles. Increases the interstate speed limit to 60 miles per hour for most other motor vehicles, including buses and motor trucks with a gross vehicle weight rating of more than 10,000 pounds or a truck tractor with a gross vehicle weight rating of more than 8,000 pounds.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

BACKGROUND: Senate Bill 459 increases the interstate highway speed limit to 70 miles per hour for most passenger vehicles. It also increases the interstate speed limit to 60 miles per hour for most other motor vehicles, including buses and motor trucks with a gross vehicle weight rating of more than 10,000 pounds or a truck tractor with a gross vehicle weight rating of more than 8,000 pounds.

The more uniform the speeds of vehicles in a traffic stream, the less chance there is for conflict and crashes. Posting speed limits lower or higher than what the majority of drivers are traveling produces two distinct groups of drivers: those attempting to observe the speed limit and those driving at a speed they feel is reasonable and prudent. These differences in speeds can result in increased crashes due to tailgating, improper passing, reckless driving, and weaving from lane to lane. However, the number of traffic crashes along any highway is related to numerous factors.

The primary basis for establishing a proper, realistic speed limit is the nationally recognized method of using the 85th percentile speed. This is the speed at or below which 85% of the traffic moves. Historically, before and after traffic-engineering studies have shown that changing the posted speed limit does not significantly affect the 85th percentile speed. The driving environment, which includes other traffic on the road and roadway conditions, is the primary factor that influences the prevailing speed.

Use of the 85th percentile speed acknowledges that 15% of the drivers are traveling above a speed that is reasonable and proper. This is the 15% of motorists at which enforcement action is directed. Studies have shown that this is the group of motorists that cause many of the crashes and have the worst driving records.

According to a 2004 ODOT report, existing speed data indicates that the statewide average 85th percentile speed of passenger cars on rural interstate highways is 71.1 mph. Using the existing data and current speed limit trends across the country, and in our neighboring states, Senate Bill 459 will keep the Oregon interstate system safe and reduce travel times.

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