

HB 3389 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Carrier: Sen. Girod

Senate Committee On Business and Transportation

Action Date: 05/10/17
Action: Do pass.
Vote: 5-0-0-0
Yeas: 5 - Beyer, Girod, Monroe, Riley, Thomsen
Fiscal: Has minimal fiscal impact
Revenue: Has minimal revenue impact
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WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Expands criteria for traffic offenses relating to rail grade crossings and adds a requirement for drivers to stop at rail grade crossings for on-track equipment.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Dangers related to train-automobile collisions
- Intersections with signals versus intersections without signals
- Confusion about whether car or on-track equipment currently has right of way

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

A grade crossing is an intersection where a road crosses a railway line at the same level, as opposed to where one crosses the other on an overpass at different elevation. In many, but not all, cases, such crossings are controlled by gates and lights to warn drivers and pedestrians not to cross the tracks due to approaching vehicles on the railway. However, due to the nature of the intersections, collisions often occur, and are often fatal. The Federal Rail Administration's Office of Safety Analysis indicates that in 2014 (the last year for which final statistics are available), there were 2,295 collisions at grade crossings in the United States, resulting in 873 injuries and 262 fatalities.

Under current law, motor vehicles approaching a grade crossing must stop for, or yield to, oncoming trains. However, statute refers only to "trains," meaning that drivers are not, by law, required to stop or yield to on-track equipment, such as shoulder cleaners, defect detection cars, undercutters, spike inserter/pullers, ballast regulators or other inspection equipment. House Bill 3389 clarifies that motor vehicles must yield at grade crossings for on-track equipment.