

SUBJECT: Creating lane restrictions for commercial vehicles in highway work zones

COMMITTEE: Transportation — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 11 ayes — Pickett, Martinez, Burkett, Y. Davis, Fletcher, Harless, Israel, Murr, Paddie, Phillips, Simmons

0 nays

1 absent — McClendon

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Jennifer Newton, AGC of Texas)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: John Barton, TxDOT)

BACKGROUND: Transportation Code, ch. 545 provides laws for the safe operation of vehicles, including commercial vehicles. “Commercial motor vehicle,” as defined by sec. 548.001, includes vehicles designed to carry passengers or cargo that have a gross weight between 26,000 and 48,000 pounds, carry 15 or more passengers, or carry hazardous materials that require placards under the federal Hazardous Materials Transportation Act.

Sec. 472.022 defines a “construction or maintenance work zone” as a portion of highway or street where highway construction or maintenance is being undertaken, other than mobile operations as defined by the Texas Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

Highway work zones can present safety hazards due to narrowed lanes and reduced visibility resulting from barriers and sharp turns. Because of their size, commercial vehicles can make work zones even more hazardous.

DIGEST: HB 3225 would allow the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to confine the operation of commercial motor vehicles to a specific lane

within a construction or maintenance work zone if a traffic study conducted by the department indicated that such a restriction was necessary to improve road safety. TxDOT could rescind a lane restriction if it determined the restriction was no longer needed.

If TxDOT designated a lane for commercial vehicles, it would be required to erect signs or other traffic control devices to indicate which lane was for commercial vehicles. HB 3225 could not be enforced if these devices were not in place.

The lane restriction would expire if the lane was no longer in a work zone. If TxDOT rescinded a lane restriction or the restriction expired, the agency would be required to remove the signs and other traffic control devices indicating the lane restriction.

This bill would take effect September 1, 2015.