

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 3599
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

A new breed of hybrid vehicles are emerging in the United States due to consumer interest in fuel efficient and clean-fuel vehicles, and some of these vehicles fall under the definition of a motorcycle rather than an automobile because they have three wheels instead of four. However, these roadworthy vehicles are more similar to automobiles than motorcycles in regard to safety features, such as enclosed cabs, steering wheels, seat belts, and windshields. Regardless of these safety features and because these vehicles are officially classified as motorcycles, their drivers are currently required to obtain a Class M motorcycle driver's license, which entails learning to drive a two-wheeled motorcycle and taking a driver's test on a motorcycle. While these vehicles share some similarities to a motorcycle, the three wheels give the driver more stability than a motorcycle, and the cab is fully enclosed, like most automobiles.

H.B. 3599 provides a definition for a motorcycle that is an enclosed three-wheeled passenger vehicle and incorporates Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards into that definition to ensure adequate safety features. The bill allows drivers of these vehicles to operate them with a Class C driver's license, clarifies current law that drivers and riders of these vehicles are not required to wear helmets, and ensures that enclosed three-wheeled vehicles as described in the bill join traditional motorcycles in having the use of preferential lanes.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 521.001(a), Transportation Code, by adding Subdivision (6-a) to define "motorcycle."

SECTION 2. Amends Section 521.085, Transportation Code, as follows:

Sec. 521.085. TYPE OF VEHICLE AUTHORIZED. (a) Creates this subsection from existing text. Authorizes the license holder, unless prohibited by Chapter 522 (Commercial Driver's Licenses), and except as provided by Subsection (b), to operate any vehicle of the type for which that class of license is issued and any lesser type of vehicle other than a motorcycle or moped.

(b) Provides that Subsection (a) does not prohibit a license holder from operating a lesser type of vehicle that is a motorcycle described by Section 521.001(a)(6-a).

SECTION 3. Amends Section 661.001(1), Transportation Code, to redefine "motorcycle."

SECTION 4. Amends Section 680.013, Transportation Code, as follows:

Sec. 680.013. USE OF PREFERENTIAL LANE BY MOTORCYCLE. Authorizes a motorcycle, including a motorcycle described by Section 521.001(a)(6-a), to be operated in a preferential lane that is not closed to all vehicular traffic.

SECTION 5. Effective date: September 1, 2009.