

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1815
By: Seliger
Transportation
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Texas state statute differs from federal standards in regards to size and weight limits when traveling on federal highways. Examples include: increased idle reduction technology, emergency vehicle weights, automobile transporters, and towaway trailer transportation combination lengths. Additionally, federal rules have also evolved with oversize and overweight permits.

S.B. 1815 updates the Transportation Code to ensure compliance with federal standards. Conforming state statute to federal standards reduces the risk of federal lawsuits and the potential loss of federal highway funds.

As proposed, S.B. 1815 amends current law relating to motor vehicle size and weight limitations.

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 Chapter 622, Transportation Code, by adding Subchapter K, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER K. AUTOMOBILE TRANSPORTERS

Sec. 622.151. DEFINITIONS. Defines "automobile transporter," "backhaul," and "stinger-steered."

Sec. 622.152. AUTOMOBILE TRANSPORTER BACKHAULS. (a) Authorizes an automobile transporter that complies with the weight and size limitations for a truck-tractor and semitrailer combination under Subtitle E (Vehicle Size and Weight) to transport cargo or general freight on a backhaul.

(b) Provides that, for purposes of Subsection (a), an automobile transporter is presumed to be on a backhaul if the automobile transporter is transporting cargo or general freight back over all or part of the same route.

Sec. 622.153. MAXIMUM EXTENDED LENGTH OF LOAD. Authorizes an automobile transporter that is stinger-steered, notwithstanding Section 621.206 (Maximum Extended Length of Load), to carry a load that extends not more than four feet beyond its front, and six feet beyond its rear.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 622.902, Transportation Code, as follows:

Sec. 622.902. LENGTH EXCEPTIONS. Provides that the length limitations provided by Sections 621.203 (Maximum Length of Motor Vehicle) to 621.205 (Maximum Length of Vehicle Combinations) do not apply to certain vehicles, including a towaway trailer transporter combination, as defined by 49 U.S.C. Section 31111, if the overall length of the combination is not longer than 82 feet. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 622.952, Transportation Code, as follows:

Sec. 622.952. New heading: EMERGENCY VEHICLE. (a) Provides that the weight limitations of Section 621.101 (Maximum Weight of Vehicle or Combination) do not apply to an emergency vehicle, rather than a vehicle owned or operated by a public, private, or volunteer fire department.

(b) Prohibits the weight of an emergency vehicle from exceeding the greater of the manufacturer's gross vehicle weight capacity or axle design rating, or, including all enforcement tolerances, a gross weight of 86,000 pounds, single steering axle weight of 24,000 pounds, single drive axle weight of 33,500 pounds, tandem axle weight of 62,000 pounds, or tandem rear drive steer axle weight of 52,000 pounds. Deletes existing text prohibiting the weight of a fire department's vehicle from being heavier than the manufacturer's gross vehicle weight capacity or axle design rating.

(c) Defines "emergency vehicle."

SECTION 4. Amends Section 622.955(c), Transportation Code, to prohibit the weight increase under Subsection (b) (relating to requiring that the maximum gross vehicle and axle weight limit for certain vehicles, to be increased to compensate for the additional weight of an idle reduction system) from being greater than 500 pounds, rather than 400 pounds.

SECTION 5. Amends Sections 623.071(a), (c), and (c-1), Transportation Code, as follows:

(a) Authorizes the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV) to issue a permit to allow the operation on a state highway of equipment that exceeds the weight and size limits provided by law for the movement of equipment or a commodity that cannot reasonably be dismantled. Deletes existing text authorizing TxDMV to issue a permit to a person to operate over a state highway superheavy or oversize equipment that is used to transport cylindrically shaped bales of hay or a commodity that cannot reasonably be dismantled, and that has a gross weight or size that exceeds the limits allowed by law to be transported over a state highway.

(c) Authorizes TxDMV to issue an annual permit to allow the operation on a state highway of equipment that exceeds weight and size limits provided by law for the movement of certain equipment or commodities, rather than movement of certain superheavy or oversize equipment.

(c-1) Authorizes TxDMV to issue an annual permit that allows a person to operate over a state highway or road a vehicle or combination of vehicles transporting a load that cannot reasonably be dismantled that exceeds the length and height limits provided by law, except that the maximum length allowed is prohibited from exceeding 110 feet and the maximum height allowed is prohibited from exceeding 14 feet.

SECTION 6. Makes application of this Act prospective.

SECTION 7. Effective date: September 1, 2021.