

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD
Austin, Texas

FISCAL NOTE, 79TH LEGISLATIVE REGULAR SESSION

March 31, 2005

TO: Honorable Mike Krusee, Chair, House Committee on Transportation

FROM: John S. O'Brien, Deputy Director, Legislative Budget Board

IN RE: HB1497 by Herrero (Relating to application of school crossing zone speed limits to school-related events.), **As Introduced**

No fiscal implication to the State is anticipated.

The bill would amend the definition of "school crossing zone" as it relates to Subtitle C, Transportation Code, Rules of the Road. School crossing zone would include a reduced-speed zone designated on a street by a local authority to facilitate safe crossing of the street by persons attending a school-related event at a public or private elementary or secondary school during the time the persons are attending the event. The bill would take effect immediately if it receives the required two-thirds vote in each house; otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2005.

Under current statute, a school crossing zone applies to a reduced-speed zone designated on a street by a local authority to facilitate safe crossing of the street by children going to or leaving a public or private elementary or secondary school during the time the reduced speed limit applies. While the Texas Department of Transportation provides school zone flashing lights on highways in certain communities, the agency states that by rule, it already implements the provisions of the bill; therefore, there would be no fiscal impact to the state.

Local Government Impact

The local authority responsible for school zones varies. It is the municipality or the county in which the school district exists in some areas and is the school district itself in others. The Legislative Budget Board contacted a sampling of municipalities and school districts regarding the fiscal impact of the bill.

It is assumed that adding reduced-speed zones during the times of a school-related event to the definition of a school crossing zone, would require a local authority to provide signs, signals, or crossing guards to notify drivers that reduced speeds are in effect during school-related events. The cost would vary by local authority depending on the type of system(s) already in place, the complexity and expense of adjusting those systems, and the number of applicable schools where adjustments would be required. The responses summarized below indicate costs would vary from negligible to several thousand to \$1.3 million.

The City of Amarillo (population 173,627) reports that its flashing school zone lights can be activated by pager and, therefore, costs for activation for special events would be negligible.

The Lubbock Independent School District reports that the City of Lubbock (population 199,564) controls the electronic mechanisms that control the reduced speed signs. Although the city did not respond, based on the LISD's understanding of the system, the ISD anticipates no significant fiscal impact to the city.

The City of Carrollton (population 109,576) based its estimated costs on creation of temporary signs, installation and removal of those signs as events occur, and programming of flashers, for an estimated cost of \$100,000 in fiscal year 2006. The city anticipates similar costs for each fiscal year thereafter.

While the city did not include a dollar amount, it also estimates there would be an increase in costs associated with enforcement of the school zones during special events.

The City of Weatherford (population 19,000) provided two possible methods of implementation and associated costs. The city indicated that if it were to erect signs indicating school zone speed limits apply 24 hours per day, the costs would be minimal. If, however, the city were to apply school zone speeds only during school hours and special events hours, the estimated cost of \$83,500 the first year of implementation would include one-fourth of a full-time-equivalent position, capital outlay, and annual maintenance of equipment. The city estimates annual costs thereafter for maintenance would range from \$8,875 in fiscal year 2007 to \$10,116 by fiscal year 2010. These amounts are not significant as a portion of the city's overall budget.

The City of Allen (population 43,554) estimates that the city would incur costs of \$100 to \$200 per sign for reprogramming each flasher.

The City of Fort Worth (population 534,694) indicates that there are currently 151 flashers in place and that there are 112 school zones without flashers. The city estimates that the one-time cost of installing flashers in the remaining 112 school zones would be over \$1.3 million. The city states that it would also incur annual costs for handling requests from the schools and making the programming adjustments as requested.

Source Agencies: 601 Department of Transportation

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