

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 299
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Transportation
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

According to interested parties, buses on highly congested road corridors cause delays for other traffic when they stop for passengers or layover at a stop in order to meet scheduling requirements. While some transit authorities, in coordination with their local jurisdictions, use bus pullouts in attempts to minimize traffic delays on busy corridors and to provide a better customer experience at stops that are farther from the flow of traffic, these parties contend that transit authorities prefer not to provide or use a bus pullout option unless there is a means to reenter the flow of traffic without substantial delay. A hybrid beacon would stop traffic for a brief period and allow a bus to safely reenter traffic.

A Texas transit authority is seeking to use hybrid beacons in a Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) approved experiment for mid-block bus pullouts, requiring a change to statutory provisions relating to traffic control signals that would in turn permit the use of beacons and the ticketing of an individual who proceeds through the stop phase of such a signal. C.S.H.B. 299 seeks to clear the way for a TxDOT approved experiment that would inform certain federal and state agencies prior to making changes to the federal Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and the Texas Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices relating to the implementation of mid-block hybrid beacons in locations deemed necessary throughout Texas.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 299 amends the Transportation Code to replace the term "pedestrian hybrid beacon" with "hybrid beacon" and to define that term as a controller-activated, rather than pedestrian-controlled, traffic-control signal. The bill, in defining "hybrid beacon," expands the entities able to activate a hybrid beacon to include, in addition to a pedestrian, an emergency vehicle, another vehicle or person authorized by the manual for a uniform system of traffic-control devices adopted by the Texas Transportation Commission, and a vehicle operated by a metropolitan rapid transit authority if the authority was confirmed before July 1, 1985, and the principal municipality in the service area of the authority has a population of less than 850,000 and if the activation of the beacon is authorized under an approved experimentation as provided in that manual.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2013.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 299 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following comparison is organized and highlighted in a manner that indicates the substantial differences

between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

INTRODUCED

SECTION 1. Sections 544.007(i) and (j), Transportation Code, are amended to read as follows:

(i) An operator of a vehicle facing a traffic-control signal, other than a freeway entrance ramp control signal or a ~~[pedestrian]~~ hybrid beacon, that does not display an indication in any of the signal heads shall stop as provided by Section 544.010 as if the intersection had a stop sign.

(j) In this section:

(1) "Freeway entrance ramp control signal" means a traffic-control signal that controls the flow of traffic entering a freeway.

(2) "Hybrid ~~[Pedestrian-hybrid]~~ beacon" means a controller-activated ~~[pedestrian-controlled]~~ traffic-control signal that displays different colored lights successively only when activated by a pedestrian, transit vehicle operated by an authority under Chapter 451 or 452 or a transit department under Chapter 453, emergency vehicle, or other authorized vehicle or person.

SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2013.

HOUSE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

SECTION 1. Section 544.007, Transportation Code, is amended by amending Subsections (i) and (j) and adding Subsection (k) to read as follows:

(i) An operator of a vehicle facing a traffic-control signal, other than a freeway entrance ramp control signal or a ~~[pedestrian]~~ hybrid beacon, that does not display an indication in any of the signal heads shall stop as provided by Section 544.010 as if the intersection had a stop sign.

(j) In this section:

(1) "Freeway entrance ramp control signal" means a traffic-control signal that controls the flow of traffic entering a freeway.

(2) "Hybrid ~~[Pedestrian-hybrid]~~ beacon" means a controller-activated ~~[pedestrian-controlled]~~ traffic-control signal that displays different colored lights successively only when activated by a pedestrian or an emergency vehicle or other vehicle or person authorized by Subsection (k) or by the manual adopted under Section 544.001.

(k) A vehicle operated by an authority created under Chapter 451 may activate a hybrid beacon if:

(1) the authority was confirmed before July 1, 1985, and the principal municipality in the service area of the authority has a population of less than 850,000; and

(2) the activation of the beacon is authorized under an experimentation approved by the department as provided in the manual adopted under Section 544.001.

SECTION 2. Same as introduced version.