

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 1815
By: Seliger
Transportation
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

State transportation law differs from federal regulations with regard to size and weight limitations for certain vehicles traveling on federal highways. Some of these differences 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, whereas state law has lagged behind. There have been calls to update state law to ensure vehicles operated in Texas are in compliance with these federal standards, which will reduce the risk of federal lawsuits and the potential loss of federal highway funds. S.B. 1815 seeks to address these issues by revising provisions relating to vehicle size and weight limitations.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

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

S.B. 1815 amends the Transportation Code to authorize an automobile transporter that complies with the state law weight and size limitations for a truck-tractor and semitrailer combination to transport cargo or general freight on a backhaul. 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. The bill authorizes an automobile transporter that is stinger-steered to carry a load that extends not more than four feet beyond its front and six feet beyond its rear. The bill defines "automobile transporter," "backhaul," and "stinger-steered."

S.B. 1815 exempts a towaway trailer transporter combination, as defined by federal law, from the maximum length limitations for a motor vehicle, semitrailer or trailer, or vehicle combination under state law if the overall length of the combination is not longer than 82 feet.

S.B. 1815 extends the applicability of the exemption for fire department vehicles from maximum weight limitations to any emergency vehicle designed to be used under emergency conditions to transport personnel and equipment and to support the suppression of fires and mitigation of other hazardous situations and revises the maximum allowable weight of such a vehicle.

S.B. 1815 raises the cap on the increase of the maximum gross vehicle weight limit and axle weight limit for any vehicle or combination of vehicles equipped with an idle reduction system from 400 pounds to 550 pounds.

S.B. 1815 clarifies that the authority of the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles to issue a permit to move certain superheavy or oversize equipment on a state highway applies with respect to equipment that exceeds the weight and size limits provided by law for the movement of equipment or a commodity that cannot reasonably be dismantled.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2021.