

STORAGE NAME: h0221.tr.doc
DATE: December 6, 2001

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION
ANALYSIS**

BILL #: HB 221
RELATING TO: Traffic Control/Move Over Act
SPONSOR(S): Representative(s) Flanagan

TIED BILL(S):

ORIGINATING COMMITTEE(S)/COUNCIL(S)/COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERENCE:

- (1) TRANSPORTATION
 - (2) HEALTH REGULATION
 - (3) READY INFRASTRUCTURE COUNCIL
 - (4)
 - (5)
-

I. SUMMARY:

Motorists are currently required to yield to moving emergency vehicles operating sirens or flashing lights. The bill requires that motorists also yield to parked emergency vehicles displaying flashing lights by either moving to the farthest available lane traveling in the same direction, or, if none exists, slowing to a speed 20 mph less than the posted speed limit.

In addition, current law does not allow a wrecker to display amber lights while going to and from the scene of an operation or hazard. The bill authorizes a wrecker to use amber lights while performing recoveries and loading on the roadside day or night, and while towing a vehicle, unless the vehicle is hauled on a flatbed, car carrier, or rollback without any objects protruding.

This bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state or local governments.

SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS:

A. DOES THE BILL SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|---|
| 1. <u>Less Government</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. <u>Lower Taxes</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. <u>Individual Freedom</u> | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. <u>Personal Responsibility</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. <u>Family Empowerment</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

For any principle that received a "no" above, please explain:

Less Government:

The bill increases regulation of motorists by requiring that they yield or reduce speed when approaching a parked emergency vehicle displaying visual signals. Under current law, no such requirement exists.

B. PRESENT SITUATION:

Current law requires motorists and pedestrians to yield to an emergency vehicle en route to an emergency when the operator of the emergency vehicle has activated either audible or visible emergency warning devices. Motorists are required to move as close as possible to the nearest curb edge. However, motorists are not required to yield for an emergency vehicle parked at the roadside, even if the vehicle is parked at the shoulder to attend to an emergency situation or to ticket traffic violators.

For the purposes of the State Uniform Traffic Control laws, "authorized emergency vehicles" include "vehicles of the fire department (fire patrol), police vehicles, and such ambulances and emergency vehicles of municipal departments, public service corporations operated by private corporations, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Department of Transportation as are designated or authorized by their respective department or the chief of police of an incorporated city or any sheriff of any of the various counties."

In Florida, six troopers have died after being struck by motor vehicles during roadside stops – three in the past ten years. In addition, since 1990, at least five deputies, police officers, and special agents have been killed by motor vehicles in Florida while conducting roadside stops or assistance. In total, since 1990, eight Florida law enforcement officers have died in this manner. The Florida Highway Patrol has addressed this issue by altering the signal configuration on patrol cars. According to the Florida Highway Patrol, anecdotal evidence indicates that the addition of amber lights to the light bars and rear windows of the patrol cars has improved motorists awareness of a safety hazard, and has reduced the tendency of motorists to be drawn closer to emergency sites where only blue flashing signals are used.

In addition, current law provides that "wreckers ... may show or display amber lights when in actual operation or when a hazard exists provided they are not used going to and from the scene of operation or hazard without specific authorization of a law enforcement officer or law enforcement agency." According to proponents of the bill, this language is ambiguous and lends itself to uneven

enforcement from county to county. Proponents say that a wrecker operator performing a task may be forbidden in one county from using amber signals, but may be required to do so in a different county while performing the same task.

C. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

This bill requires that, where there are two or more lanes traveling in the same direction, motorists merge into the lane farthest from an emergency vehicle parked at the roadside when the emergency vehicle is making use of its visual signals. In instances where the motorist is traveling on a two-lane road, he or she must slow to a speed that is 20 mph less than the posted speed limit. These requirements are in addition to those requiring that a motorist yield for a moving emergency vehicle. The bill also provides that the new motorist responsibilities do not relieve a driver of an emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons using the highway.

In addition, the bill authorizes wrecker operators to use amber rotating or flashing lights while performing recoveries and loading on the roadside, day or night. If he or she deems it necessary, a wrecker operator may use amber lights while towing a vehicle in a variety of ways, including on wheel lifts, slings, or by under-reach.

However, such lights may not be used when an operator is hauling a vehicle on a flatbed, car carrier, or rollback unless protruding objects create a hazard to other motorists. By leaving to wrecker operators the discretion of whether to use amber signals in certain situations, the bill's provisions reduce the chance that the law will be unevenly applied.

D. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS:

Section 1. Provides a short title – the “Move Over Act.”

Section 2. Requires that motorists approaching a parked emergency vehicle displaying visual signals either move to the farthest possible lane traveling in the same direction, or, if no such lane is available, slow to a speed 20 mph less than the posted speed limit, unless otherwise instructed by a law enforcement officer. The section also provides that drivers of emergency vehicles are not relieved from driving with due regard for the safety of those using the highway.

Section 3. Authorizes a wrecker to use amber lights while performing recoveries and loading on the roadside day or night, and while towing a vehicle, unless the vehicle is hauled on a flatbed, car carrier, or rollback without objects protruding.

Section 4. Provides an effective date of July 1, 2002.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT:

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

N/A

III. CONSEQUENCES OF ARTICLE VII, SECTION 18 OF THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION:

A. APPLICABILITY OF THE MANDATES PROVISION:

The bill does not require a city or county to expend funds or to take any action requiring the expenditure of any funds.

B. REDUCTION OF REVENUE RAISING AUTHORITY:

The bill does not reduce the revenue raising authority of any city or county.

C. REDUCTION OF STATE TAX SHARED WITH COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES:

The bill does not reduce the amount of state tax shared with a county or city.

IV. COMMENTS:

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

N/A

C. OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

V. AMENDMENTS OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES:

N/A

STORAGE NAME: h0221.tr.doc

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PAGE: 5

VI. SIGNATURES:

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION:

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