

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education

BILL: CS/SB 650

INTRODUCER: Transportation Committee; and Senators Leek and Rouson

SUBJECT: Hazardous Walking Conditions

DATE: April 9, 2025

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Shutes	Vickers	TR	Fav/CS
2.	Gray	Elwell	AED	Pre-meeting
3.			RC	

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 650 expands the criteria for identifying hazardous walking conditions for public elementary school students to include walkways along a freeway, including any entrance ramp, exit ramp, or interchange, regardless of the posted speed limit.

The bill may have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact on local governments. **See Section V. Fiscal Impact Statement.**

This bill takes effect July 1, 2025.

II. Present Situation:

Hazardous Walking Conditions

Hazardous walking conditions are classified based on statutory criteria for walkways that are parallel or perpendicular to a road, as well as for crossings over the road at uncontrolled sites that students must use to walk to and from school.¹

¹ Section 1006.23(2), F.S.

The purpose of identifying hazardous walking conditions is to ensure that public school students, whose grade level does not exceed grade six² and who live within two miles of their school are eligible for state transportation funding if they walk to school and are subjected to such conditions.³ State funds are generally not allocated for transporting these students unless a hazardous walking condition is identified.⁴

The following statutory criteria define hazardous walking conditions for walkways parallel to the road.

Walkways Parallel to the Road

A hazardous walking condition exists for walkways parallel to the road when there is less than a four-foot wide surface adjacent to the road for students to walk, not including drainage ditches, sluiceways, swales, or channels. Additionally, if the road is uncurbed and has a posted speed limit of 50 miles per hour or greater, the walking surface must be set back at least three feet from the edge of the road, or it will be identified as a hazardous walking condition.

A condition on a parallel walkway may not be designated as hazardous if:

- The volume of traffic on the road is less than 180 vehicles per hour, per direction, during the time when students walk to and from school; or
- The road is located in a residential area with a posted speed limit of 30 miles per hour or less.⁵

Inspecting, Determining, and Reporting Hazardous Walking Conditions

Identification of hazardous walking conditions begins when the district school superintendent requests a review of a condition perceived to be hazardous for students who live within the two-mile limit of a school and who walk to school.

Once a request for review is received, the perceived hazardous walking condition must be jointly inspected by a representative of the:

- school district;
- state or local governmental entity with jurisdiction over the location; and
- either a municipal police department, the sheriff's office, or the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

Under current law, the governmental representatives must determine whether the condition constitutes a hazardous walking condition. If the governmental representatives concur that a condition constitutes a hazardous walking condition, the governmental entity with jurisdiction must report that determination in writing to the superintendent, who then initiates a formal request for correction.

² Section 1006.23(1), F.S.

³ Section 1006.23(4), F.S.

⁴ Section 1011.68(1), F.S.

⁵ Section 1006.23(2), F.S.

If the governmental representatives are unable to reach a consensus, the reasons for lack of consensus are reported to the superintendent, who must provide a report and recommendation to the district school board. The board may initiate a proceeding under Chapter 86 of the Florida Statutes, to determine whether the condition constitutes a hazardous walking condition after providing at least 30 days' notice to the state or local governmental entity having jurisdiction over the road.⁶

Roadway Definitions and Access

The FDOT Design Manual sets forth design criteria, as well as procedures, for all new construction, reconstruction, and resurfacing projects on the State Highway System and the National Highway System. The manual utilizes a functional classification that groups streets and highways into classes, or systems, according to the character of service they are intended to provide. Relevant definitions include:

- *Freeway*: A freeway is a divided highway that provides full control of access (i.e. limited access) and is intended for long distance trips.
- *Expressway*: Expressways are freeways situated in major metropolitan areas with primary service for commuters; and may or may not be tolled.
- *Ramp*: A turning roadway that connects a freeway to a crossing roadway within an interchange.⁷

Section 316.091, F.S., prohibits the operation of a bicycle or other human-powered vehicle on the roadway or along the shoulder of a limited access highway, including bridges, unless official signs and a designated, marked bicycle lane are present at the entrance of the section of highway indicating that such use is permitted pursuant to a pilot program of the FDOT.⁸

Safe Routes to School Program

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a statewide program funded by the FDOT. Its goal is to make it safer for more children to walk and bicycle to school. The program provides funding for roadway improvement projects that improve safety near schools. The program funds projects that address unsafe or lack of infrastructure, as well as programs that promote walking and bicycling through education/encouragement programs aimed at children, parents, and the community.⁹

A 2022 OPPAGA report found that for Fiscal Years 2016-2017 through 2021-2022, FDOT allocated approximately \$40 million to 30 school districts for 109 SRTS projects. Most of the SRTS projects involved the construction of sidewalks.¹⁰

⁶ Section 1006.23(3), F.S.

⁷ Florida Department of Transportation, *FDOT Design Manual 2025*, at 1, available at https://fdotwww.blob.core.windows.net/sitefinity/docs/default-source/roadway/fdm/2025/2025-fdm-complete.pdf?sfvrsn=624b0e74_10

⁸ Section 316.091(4), F.S.

⁹ Florida Department of Transportation, *What is Florida SRTS?*, available at <https://www.fdot.gov/projects/floridasrts/florida-safe-routes-to-school/what-is-florida-srts> (last visited March 22, 2025).

¹⁰ OPPAGA, *Hazardous Walking Conditions in Florida: A 2022 Analysis* (2022), at 45, available at <https://ricksblog.biz/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/OPPAGA-Research-Hazardous-Walking-Conditions-07-26-2022.pdf> (last visited March 22, 2025).

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill expands the criteria for identifying hazardous walking conditions for public elementary school students who use walkways parallel to the road to walk to and from school. The bill adds that a walkway is also considered hazardous if it is along a freeway, including entrance ramps, exit ramps, and interchanges, regardless of the posted speed limit.

It is unclear from the bill, but local school districts may be required to purchase additional buses for increased transportation services for students who currently use walkways that would be considered hazardous under the requirements of the bill.

The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2025.

IV. Constitutional Issues:**A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill could increase the number of students eligible for school transportation services. As a result, school districts may incur costs related to the purchase of additional buses for

increased transportation services. Thus, the bill could have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact on local government expenditures.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill amends section 1006.23 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS by Transportation on March 12, 2025:

The committee substitute removed the reference in the bill related to expressways.

B. Amendments:

None.