



# Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

## Department of Transportation

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DATE: April 2, 2009

TO: Senate Business and Transportation Committee

FROM: Troy E. Costales, Administrator  
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SUBJECT: Senate Bill 17

## INTRODUCTION

Senate Bill 17 authorizes a combination of three vehicles to be operated on a highway with a newly created vehicle combination endorsement. The vehicle combination cannot exceed 65 feet, it must be operated during daylight hours on highways approved by ODOT, and it can only be operated for personal use. The bill also establishes fees for the vehicle combination endorsement and creates a Vehicle Combination Safety Subaccount. The bill further requires the department to establish and provided a training and education program to teach applicants the safe operation of combinations of three vehicles using both classroom and driving instruction.

## WHAT THE BILL DOES

Senate Bill 17 would require ODOT to create a driver license endorsement that would allow regular Class C drivers to operate three vehicles in combination under certain circumstances. Fees raised from the new endorsement are to be used in support of training, safety promotion and public education.

The bill further requires ODOT to establish a vehicle combination education course that includes both classroom and driving instruction. After curriculum is developed, training could be offered by private providers. ODOT staff would oversee the development of the program and monitor it on an ongoing basis.

The bill would also require ODOT to evaluate all highways including city and county roads and approve which routes could be used for the new three-vehicle combination. ODOT has the technical ability to model the route of three-combination vehicles on all state highways to determine which highways may be suitable for this combination of vehicles, but does not have the tools necessary on local roads. ODOT staff will compare the modeling data collected to the inventory of state highways to then approve the routes for the combination of three vehicles.

## **CONCERNS**

ODOT has concerns that the proposed legislation may allow unsafe vehicle combinations to travel Oregon's roads. The bill does not specify the order of vehicles or take into consideration the potential to overload the Gross Combined Vehicle Weight for the tow vehicle or exceed the capacity of the braking system or tire ratings. Combinations allowed under SB 17 may not be able to stay in their travel lanes due to the turning radius needed for some combinations of vehicles. In addition, few recreational vehicles are built to withstand the additional load on the rear of the vehicle.

ODOT is unaware whether any providers would offer this type of specialty training. ODOT does not have the expertise in-house to provide this type of training. No known training exists to teach non-commercial drivers how to drive a three-vehicle combination.

ODOT has concerns that the agency does not have the tools necessary to evaluate city and county roads. ODOT would recommend hiring a consultant to implement SB 17 and conduct the analysis, inventory gathering, communication and coordination with cities and counties. ODOT is also concerned that should state highway routes be approved without the evaluation of city and county connecting routes, three-vehicle combinations could not lawfully travel beyond those approved state highways.

SB 17 would become effective on January 1, 2010. ODOT Transportation Safety will offer the safety training course by July 1, 2010. Due to the extensive amount of programming and other computer work in progress to comply with state and federal mandates, DMV cannot begin to issue the endorsement until January 1, 2011.

## **SUMMARY**

Senate Bill 17 would allow a combination of three vehicles to be operated on a highway under certain conditions. The bill would require ODOT to create a new driver license endorsement, develop training for the three vehicle combinations and evaluate highways to determine which routes are appropriate for operation of the new combination of vehicles. ODOT has concerns that the bill may allow unsafe vehicle combinations on Oregon's roads, there may not be providers who can offer this specialty training, and that ODOT does not have the necessary tools to evaluate city and county roads.