

DATE: March 27, 2003

TO: Senate Transportation and Economic Development Committee

FROM: Troy E. Costales, Manager
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SUBJECT: Senate Bill 661

Introduction

Senate Bill 661 permits commercial vehicles to be equipped with amber warning lights.

Discussion

This bill allows any vehicle used for the transportation of persons for compensation or profit or any vehicle that is used primarily for transportation of property to be equipped with amber warning lights. The bill limits the use of these warning lights to warn other drivers about traffic hazards.

The intent of the bill seems valid, however, current statutes allow vehicles to use their hazard lights, or flashing parking lights, to achieve the same goal of warning approaching vehicles of a hazard. ODOT is concerned that by allowing thousands of vehicles that fit into the commercial vehicle classification to be equipped with and use warning lights, that their effectiveness as a hazard warning may be jeopardized.

Proposed Amendments

ODOT believes that the intent of the bill will be met with two potential amendments. The first is to limit the type of commercial vehicle that can use the amber warning lights to 801.210 (2). The second is to help with potential liability for commercial vehicles that are equipped with the amber warning lights by changing the "shall" in Section 1, line 18, to "may only."

Summary

ODOT is concerned that the bill as written allows the use of these lights by thousands of vehicles. Consequently, it would reduce their effectiveness because of overuse and fail to provide extra public notice or safety. Adoption of the amendments discussed above will allow the appropriate use of amber warning lights.