

HB 702 -- FAIR FARE PASSENGER SAFETY ACT

SPONSOR: Higdon

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness by a vote of 10 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Select Committee on State and Local Governments by a vote of 9 to 1.

This bill establishes the Fair Fare Passenger Safety Act of 2015 that prohibits any person operating a motor vehicle on the highways or other public roadways of this state for compensation for the transportation of one or more passengers from using a hand-held electronic wireless communications device to send, read, or write a text message or electronic message. The person is also prohibited from making or taking part in a telephone call by means of a hand-held electronic wireless communication device.

The provisions of the bill must not apply to a person operating:

- (1) An authorized emergency vehicle; or
- (2) A moving motor vehicle while using a hand-held device to report illegal activity, summon medical or other emergency help, prevent injury to a person or property, or relay information between a transit or for-hire operator and that operator's dispatcher when the device is permanently affixed to the vehicle.

A violation of these provisions must be deemed an infraction and must be deemed a moving violation that is assessed points.

Any city or county must have the authority to adopt ordinances or regulations that are equivalent to, but not more restrictive than, the provisions of the bill.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that drivers shouldn't be distracted by a cellphone when they're in charge of someone else's safety. This law will only be violated if a passenger is in the vehicle. The bill makes a safer workplace for everyone and could save lives.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Higdon; Thad Krawczyk, III; Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation; Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen; and Missouri Nurses Association.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that federal regulations already provide requirements for commercial drivers.

Testifying on the bill was Casey Wasser, Department of Revenue and Department Of Transportation.