

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
77R4555 DWS-D

S.B. 577
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DIGEST AND PURPOSE

Currently, motor vehicle crashes are the number one killer of Texas teenagers. In 1998, more than 320 Texas teens, ages 15 through 18, died in motor vehicle crashes and another 40,324 were injured. More than 40 percent of teens' fatal crashes occur between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. Single vehicle collisions represent nearly half of fatal crashes involving 16 and 17-year-old drivers which can be linked to driver error, speed, peer passenger distraction, and lack of experience. The crash involvement rate for teens is more than double that for all other Texas drivers.

As proposed, S.B. 577 creates a graduated driver's license system that restricts teen drivers to certain driving activities during certain times of the day and eases teens into the driving experience by phasing-in driving privileges and minimizing the exposure to high-risk situations.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 521.001(a)(3), Transportation Code, by defining "driver's license" to include an intermediate license.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 521.203, Transportation Code, as follows:

Sec. 521.203. RESTRICTIONS ON CLASS A AND B LICENSES. Prohibits the Department of Public Safety (department) from issuing a Class A or Class B driver's license to a person who is under 18 years of age unless the person has held an intermediate license for at least six months preceding the date of the application, and has a completed a driver training course approved by the Texas Education Agency, rather than the Central Education Agency.

SECTION 3. Amends Chapter 521J, Transportation Code, by adding Section 521.2041, as follows:

Sec. 521.2041. ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS ON MINOR. Authorizes the department to issue a Class C driver's license to an applicant under 18 years of age only if the applicant has held an intermediate license for at least six months preceding the date of the application. Prohibits a person under 18 years of age from operating a motor vehicle unless the person and each passenger in the motor vehicle is secured by a safety belt or child passenger safety seat system.

SECTION 4. Amends Section 521.222(d), Transportation Code, by providing that an instruction permit entitles the holder to operate a type of motor vehicle on a highway while the holder is accompanied by a person occupying the seat by the operator who is 21, rather than 18, years of age or older and is the only person occupying the seat by the operator.

SECTION 5. Amends Chapter 521K, Transportation Code, by adding Section 521.2221, as follows:

Sec. 521.2221. INTERMEDIATE LICENSE. Authorizes the department to issue an intermediate license to a person who meets certain requirements. Prohibits a holder of an intermediate license from operating a motor vehicle after 11 p.m. and before 5 a.m. except in certain circumstances.

SECTION 6. Amends Section 521.223(b), Transportation Code, by requiring an applicant for a license under Subsection (a) to be at least 15 years of age but under 16 years of age, rather than 15 years or older.

SECTION 7. Provides that this Act does not affect the validity or effect of a driver's license, including an instruction permit, issued before the effective date of the Act. Provides that license is governed by the law in effect when the license was issued, and that law is continued in effect for that purpose.

SECTION 8. Effective date: January 1, 2002.