

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2780

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Education*

Title: An act relating to student pedestrian safety.

Brief Description: Creating the school pathway and bus stop improvement program.

Sponsor(s): Representatives G. Cole, Peery, Vance, Paris, Jones, Scott and J. Kohl.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Education, February 5, 1992, DP.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 18 members: Representatives Peery, Chair; G. Fisher, Vice Chair; Brough, Ranking Minority Member; Vance, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berozoff; Broback; Carlson; G. Cole; Dorn; P. Johnson; Jones; J. Kohl; Neher; Orr; Rasmussen; Roland; H. Sommers; and Valle.

Staff: Robert Butts (786-7111).

Background: The Task Force on Student Transportation Safety was established in 1989 (ESHB 2066) to develop recommendations for reducing the dangers children face as they travel to and from school. One of the task force's recommendations included the establishment of a school pathway and bus stop improvement program.

Many children in the state must walk to school on busy streets without sidewalks or adequate shoulders. In addition, children riding school buses are often loaded and unloaded in hazardous locations. These risks are especially high in regions of the state experiencing rapid residential growth. Local jurisdictions have programs to fund sidewalks, paths and trails, but the task force found these programs to be inadequate to meet identified needs.

The state pays the costs of transporting students who live more than a one-mile radius of their school. In addition, it pays for transporting children who live within one-mile

if walking to school is determined to be hazardous due to inadequate sidewalks and pathways. In the 1990-91 school year, the state paid districts \$13.8 million from the general fund for transporting children because of hazardous walking condition determinations.

ESHB 1172, which was nearly identical to this legislation, passed in the 1991 session with a budget "null and void" clause. The bill was not mentioned in the budget, and thus was nullified.

Summary of Bill: The School Pathway and Bus Stop Improvement Program Council is created. The purpose of the council is to make recommendations about roads, streets, and bus stops that the council considers inadequate for school children as they travel to school, and to develop a program for making safety improvements.

The council shall include representatives from the Legislature, Department of Transportation, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), school district administrators, school board members, counties, cities, the Traffic Safety Commission, school bus drivers, and parents. The council shall:

- (a) formulate criteria for identifying roads and school bus stops that the council considers inadequate for elementary school students and, establish recommendations for standards for making safety improvements;
- (b) based on these criteria, inventory roads within a one-mile radius of elementary schools and school bus stops considered inadequate by the council, and recommend priority safety improvement projects;
- (c) develop a plan by which the recommended priority safety improvement projects may be implemented, and make the plan available to applicable local jurisdictions;
- (d) formulate recommended guidelines for student pedestrian safety within a one-mile radius of new elementary schools; and
- (e) estimate the cost of implementing state-wide sidewalk crossing rules.

The council shall submit its recommendations and findings to the Legislature, governor, local governments, school districts, and other appropriate agencies and organizations by June 30, 1994.

Authority for the council will expire in 1997.

Fiscal Note: Requested January 28, 1992.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This legislation is needed to better protect students as they travel to and from school.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Don Carnahan, SPI (supports); and Steve Lind, Traffic Safety Commission.