
Transportation Committee

HB 1231

Brief Description: Requiring certain traffic lane merge education and testing.

Sponsors: Representatives Young, Jacobsen and Kloba.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires driver education courses to include in their curriculum instruction on the late-merge zipper method, which consists of drivers using both lanes of traffic until reaching the defined merge area and then alternating in "zipper" fashion into the single lane.
- Mandates testing of the late-merge zipper method in the written portion of the driving exam.
- Requires the Department of Licensing to provide an instructional poster, video, tutorial, or document with information on the late-merge zipper method to all driver's license renewal applicants who request a renewal at a driver licensing office.

Hearing Date: 2/17/21

Staff: Jennifer Harris (786-7143).

Background:

Vehicles Yielding to Other Vehicles.

The driver of a vehicle approaching a yield sign must slow down to a speed reasonable for the existing conditions and, if required for safety, to stop. After slowing or stopping, the driver must yield the right-of-way to any vehicle in the intersection or approaching on another roadway so closely that it constitutes an immediate hazard.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

There is no right-of-way preference in law for merging lanes without a yield or stop sign, nor is a merging rule specified for freeway acceleration lanes and ramps without a posted yield sign.

Driver Training.

To be eligible to obtain an Intermediate Driver's License, an individual between the ages of 16 and 18 must have passed a driver training course. The Department of Licensing (DOL) and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction are required to jointly develop and maintain a required curriculum for driver training that must include information on the safe, lawful, and responsible operation of motor vehicles; intermediate driver's license issuance; passenger and driving restrictions and sanctions for violating these restrictions; the effect of traffic violations and collisions on driving privileges; the effects of alcohol and drug use on motor vehicle operators; motorcycle awareness; bicycle safety; and pedestrian safety.

Instructional material used in driver training schools must include information on the proper use of the left-hand lane by motor vehicles on multilane highways, bicyclists' and pedestrians' rights and responsibilities, and suggested riding procedures in common traffic situations.

Driver's License Examination and Renewal.

To obtain a driver's license, an individual must pass a driver licensing examination. The driver's licensing examination includes a written test of the applicant's knowledge of traffic laws and ability to understand and follow the laws that regulate traffic.

A driver's license expires on the sixth anniversary of the licensee's birthdate following the issuance of the license. A driver's license must be renewed to remain valid and renewal applicants are required to apply for a renewal in person at a DOL office every other renewal.

Summary of Bill:

The required curriculum for driver training and instructional materials in driver training schools must include information on the late-merge zipper method, to be applied when two lanes are merging. The method consists of drivers using both lanes of traffic until reaching the defined merge area and then alternating in "zipper" fashion into the single lane.

Testing of the late-merge zipper method must be included in the written portion of the driving exam and requires the DOL to provide an instructional poster, video, tutorial, or document with information on the late-merge zipper method to all driver's license renewal applicants who request a renewal at a driver licensing office.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 15, 2021.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.