



JERRY PETROWSKI

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

DOT Legislative Package: Senate Bills 154 – 157

May 27, 2015

Good morning, members of the committee, and thank you for the opportunity to testify on four bills brought to me by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. These are simple, practical bills that I believe make commonsense changes and update the statutes to reflect modern practices. Representatives from DOT will also be available to answer any questions regarding these bills.

Senate Bill 154

Under current law, drivers facing a flashing yellow traffic signal may enter an intersection with caution without stopping, however the statutes are silent on the topic of flashing yellow arrow signals.

This bill clarifies that when a driver faces a flashing yellow arrow traffic signal, the driver may enter the intersection and make the turn without stopping only after yielding to other traffic lawfully in the intersection. This is a simple change to reflect modern standards in traffic control systems.

Senate Bill 155

Under current law, when pedestrian traffic control signals are in place, pedestrians may cross a roadway when the signal displays the word "Walk" and may not cross the roadway when the signal displays the words "Don't Walk."

As many of you know, current technology for these signals allow for a wider array of indicators that are not currently addressed in statute, such as a walking person symbol or an upraised hand signal. This bill updates the statutes and adds clarity to reflect other symbols that are now in use and approved under the Manual of Uniform Control Devices published by the Federal Highway Administration and adopted by the Department of Transportation.

Senate Bill 156

Current state law requires that emergency vehicles must activate both their warning lights and give an audible signal when stopping, standing, or parking in areas where doing so is normally restricted, such as on the shoulder of major highways. In practice, however, this requirement has

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been found to jeopardize the safety of law enforcement personnel, as well as other drivers, especially in situations when a large number of emergency vehicles are present with warning lights activated.

Excessive lighting can be distracting and confusing, and may also direct the focus of other drivers to the lights rather than the roadway. This is particularly true on the scene of major highway accidents, with drivers traveling the opposite direction creating a bottleneck or traffic jam when they slow and turn their attention to the lights.

This bill eliminates this requirement related to stopping, standing, and parking. In general, law enforcement personnel must still activate their warning lights and give an audible signal to remain exempt from restrictions related to speed, obedience to traffic signals, and direction of travel when in pursuit of a violator or responding to an emergency.

Senate Bill 157

Under current law, driver licenses may display a number of different restrictions pertaining to the driver (corrective eyewear, occupational hours of service, graduated driver license, etc.). Under current law, if the text of those restrictions is not able to fit on the front or back of the driver license, the Department of Motor Vehicles is required to print and provide the driver a special restrictions card, which includes the remaining text. This creates difficulty for the driver in having to maintain multiple cards, and results in increased costs and complexities for the printing vendors of driver licenses to produce and deliver these products.

This bill eliminates the requirement for DMV to issue special restriction cards. All of the restriction information for a respective driver is currently available electronically to law enforcement and is accessible to the driver, in addition to other interested parties, through their driver record maintained by DMV. Other uses of the driver license, such as identity or age verification, do not require information on the driver's restrictions. This change would eliminate the need for a driver to retain a set of cards, while at the same time would reduce DMV expenses. An online tool for drivers to verify license information is currently available, where information on a driver's restrictions could be provided at no cost.



Wisconsin Department of Transportation

www.dot.wisconsin.gov

Scott Walker
Governor

Mark Gottlieb, P.E.
Secretary

Office of the Secretary
4802 Sheboygan Avenue, Room 120B
P O Box 7910
Madison, WI 53707-7910

Telephone: 608-266-1113
FAX: 608-266-9912
E-mail: sec.exec@dot.wi.gov

DATE: May 27, 2015

TO: Members, Senate Committee on Transportation and Veterans Affairs
The Honorable Jerry Petrowski, Chair

FROM: Tom Rhatican, Assistant Deputy Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: Senate Bill 154 (flashing yellow arrow traffic signals)

Chairman Petrowski and Committee Members:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify in support of Wisconsin Senate Bill 154 (SB 154). SB 154 relates to flashing yellow arrow traffic control signals.

Under current law, vehicular traffic facing a yellow traffic control signal must stop before entering the intersection, unless the stop cannot be made safely. However, vehicular traffic facing a flashing yellow traffic control signal may enter the intersection with caution. In 2009 the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) updated its Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) to prohibit the application of a "green ball" (signal indication) in the far side median or overhead in front of an exclusive left turn lane. This requires any traffic signal that is operated under these circumstances include a flashing yellow arrow.

The standards set forth in FHWA's MUTCD are used nationally by state Departments of Transportation in order to maintain consistent signage standards. Currently, existing law does not define, nor provides a reference to, a flashing yellow arrow. SB 154 aligns with the language referenced in the MUTCD, relating to a flashing yellow arrow. Specifically, the bill clarifies that vehicular traffic facing a flashing yellow arrow traffic signal may enter the intersection without stopping, after yielding to other traffic lawfully in the intersection.

It is important for both education and enforcement purposes that flashing yellow arrow traffic signals receive a statutory meaning that coincides with their operation. Flashing yellow arrows are the standard for any new or reconstructed signals that operate a permissive left turn movement. This bill will provide additional safety for the traveling public and help improve traffic efficiency.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Nate Yahn, WisDOT legislative advisor, at (608) 266-1114.