



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.



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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 155 (pedestrian traffic signals)

Chairman Petrowski and Committee Members:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify in support of Wisconsin Senate Bill 155 (SB 155). SB 155 relates to pedestrian traffic control signals.

Under current law, when pedestrian traffic control signals are in place, pedestrians may cross a roadway when the signal exhibits the word "Walk". When the signal exhibits the words "Don't Walk", pedestrians may not begin to cross the roadway, but may complete a crossing begun while the signal exhibited the word "Walk".

Current technology for these traffic control signals, however, allow for a wider array of indicators that are not currently addressed in state law, such as a walking person symbol, an upraised hand signal, or any other symbol approved under Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The standards set forth in FHWA's MUTCD are used nationally by state Departments of Transportation in order to maintain consistent signage standards. Instead of pedestrian signs with messages using words, the MUTCD now requires the use of the walking man and hand signals.

SB 155 defines a "pedestrian signal authorizing crossing" as a signal displaying "Walk", a walking person symbol, or any other symbol approved under the *MUTCD* adopted by the department. Under this bill, the pedestrian behavior currently allowed when facing a "Walk" signal is allowed when facing a pedestrian signal authorizing crossing. This bill also defines a "pedestrian signal limiting crossing" as a signal displaying "Don't Walk", an upraised hand symbol, or any other symbol approved under the *MUTCD* adopted by the department. Under this bill, the pedestrian behavior currently proscribed or allowed when facing a "Don't Walk" signal is also proscribed or allowed when facing a pedestrian signal limiting crossing.

It is important for both education and enforcement purposes that these pedestrian signals receive a statutory meaning that coincides with their operation. This bill will provide additional safety for the traveling public and help improve the movement of pedestrians crossing the roadway.

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