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## Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 869

Assembly Committee on Transportation

January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Chairwoman VanderMeer and members of the Committee:

Thank you for taking the time to allow me to testify on Assembly Bill 869.

This bill, was originally drafted last session at the request of the Department of Transportation. It was unanimously passed out of both transportation committees last session and unanimously passed the Senate but failed to receive a vote on the Assembly Floor prior to the end of Session.

This bill allows the use of signal priority devices on traffic signals for snowplows. Currently, emergency preemption devices are placed on some traffic signals allowing authorized emergency vehicles to transmit a signal to traffic lights to change the normal light sequence and either extend a green light or change a red light to green. This allows emergency vehicles to quickly and safely proceed through intersections without getting stuck at red lights. Signal priority is a similar technology that allows snowplows to request a green light be provided or maintained to allow the vehicle time to travel through the intersection by requesting extra green time to proceed through the intersection to improve efficiencies during winter maintenance operations and provide safe travel to the motoring public.

Current statutes classify signal priority under emergency preemption devices and therefore limit their use to emergency vehicles. However, given that snowplows require different prioritization than emergency vehicles we think that creating a new level of priority for them would help increase traffic flow and snowplowing efficiency. This technology is already in use in Illinois and Utah and a study in Minnesota found increased efficiency associated with signal priority for snowplows.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



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**Testimony of Wisconsin Department of Transportation**  
**Assistant Deputy Secretary Joel Nilsestuen**  
**Before the Assembly Committee on Transportation**  
*January 30, 2024*

**Re: Assembly Bill 869, relating to traffic control sign priority devices for snow removal vehicles.**

Thank you, Chairwoman Vander Meer, and members of the committee for your consideration of the department's input on Assembly Bill 869, relating to traffic control signal priority devices for snow removal vehicles.

This bill authorizes snow removal vehicles to be equipped with lamps or other transmitters to communicate with traffic control signals equipped with traffic control priority devices.

Signal priority is a proven technology that allows equipped vehicles to request or extend a green light at some signalized intersections. Current law allows emergency vehicles to use similar equipment to preempt the traffic signal sequence to provide or extend a green light as they approach an intersection. Signal preemption is different from signal priority in that it immediately changes the timing sequence to provide a green light for the direction of the approaching vehicle. The department also uses signal preemption at signalized intersections near railroad crossings and lift bridges to clear the queue of vehicles that may be in conflict with the train or bridge and then to prevent other vehicles from entering the approach with the tracks or bridge. Signal preemption is an important safety feature at our signalized intersections.

In other states, signal priority has been shown to improve traffic flow on corridors equipped with this technology. One application is for snowplows that are actively engaged in snow removal or anti-icing to receive additional green time or request a green earlier so they can proceed safely and efficiently through the signalized intersection. In our traffic signal controllers, a signal priority request would receive a lower priority for service than a preemption request. Therefore, a vehicle requesting priority would not receive a green light if a vehicle requesting preemption was approaching from a different direction.

Equipping snowplows and traffic signals with signal priority can lead to more efficient removal of snow, quicker travel times on the snowplow route, and reduced usage of Another, more common, application for signal priority is for public transit. If public transit vehicle use was also included in the proposed bill, this would provide for safer, more efficient, and reliable transit service. This technology would provide an overall benefit to our transportation system by reducing unnecessary stops at signalized intersections.

As signal priority is generally installed on mainline highways, all traffic traveling on the mainline benefit from the prioritization. There is little to no impact to side street traffic due to the traffic signal controllers operating within programmed allowances.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.