

HB 1600 -- FAIR FARE PASSENGER SAFETY ACT

SPONSOR: Higdon

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Crime Prevention and Public Safety by a vote of 10 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Rules- Legislative Oversight Committee by a vote of 10 to 1.

This bill establishes the Fair Fare Passenger Safety Act of 2018, which prohibits any person operating a motor vehicle on the highways or other public roadways of this state for compensation for the transportation of one or more passengers from using a hand-held electronic wireless communications device to read, send, or write a text message or electronic message. The person is also prohibited from making or taking part in a telephone call by means of a hand-held electronic wireless communication device.

The provisions of the bill do not apply to a person operating:

- (1) An authorized emergency vehicle; or
- (2) A moving motor vehicle while using a hand-held device to report illegal activity, summon medical or other emergency help, prevent injury to a person or property, or relay information between a transit or for-hire operator and that operator's dispatcher when the device is permanently affixed to the vehicle.

Additional exceptions for parked or stopped vehicles, law enforcement, fire department members, and ambulance drivers are specified in the bill. The use of GPS systems and voice-operated technology to make phone calls is allowed as is the use of radio transmitters by those properly licensed under federal law.

A violation of these provisions must be deemed an infraction and must be deemed a moving violation that is assessed points.

Any city or county must have the authority to adopt ordinances or regulations that are equivalent to, but not more restrictive than, the provisions of the bill.

This bill is the same as HB 293 (2017).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that it makes sense to require drivers who are driving for a fee and who have a passenger in the car to operate a cell phone hands-free only. A leading cause of car accidents is distracted driving, and the Missouri Department of Transportation is already working on something similar in its department.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Higdon; Missouri Troopers Association; Nicole Hood, Missouri Department of Transportation; Missouri Nurses Association; Abate For Missouri; and Joe Widmer.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.