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HOUSE APPROVES BILL TO REPEAL MOTORCYCLE HELMET LAW FOR

ADULTS: The House of Representatives passed a bill April 29 that would allow adults to ride motorcycles on Missouri highways without wearing a helmet. House Bill 1109, sponsored by Rep. Larry Crawford, R-Centertown, would require only people who are under 21 years of age to wear a helmet when operating or riding as a passenger on a motorcycle or motortricycle.

MoDOT is opposed to this bill because of the safety risks for those involved in motorcycle accidents.

The bill now goes to the Senate for consideration.

PRIMARY SEAT BELT PROPOSAL REMOVED FROM BILL; ISSUE NOT DEAD

YET: The House Transportation Committee voted April 28 to remove the primary seat belt proposal from a bill before approving the legislation and sending it to the full House for debate. The primary seat belt provision had been added several weeks ago to Senate Bill 710, which would strengthen Missouri's child safety seat laws. The legislation is sponsored by Sen. Wayne Goode, D-St. Louis.

A number of bicycle and pedestrian safety issues also were removed from the bill.

If the legislation is passed by the House, it will go to conference committee where lawmakers will work out the differences between the Senate's version and the House's version. It is likely the Senators on the conference committee will try to restore the primary seat belt measure in the legislation. They also may try to put some of the bicycle issues back into the legislation.

The child safety seat portion of the bill would require children less than 4 years of age, regardless of weight, or children weighing less than 40 pounds, regardless of age, to use a child passenger restraint system when riding in a motor vehicle. It also would require children ages 4 and 5 who weigh 40 to 60 pounds to use a child restraint system or a booster seat. Children age 6 and older or weighing more than 60 pounds could use a seat belt.

Drivers violating the law and receiving a citation for not using a child safety seat could avoid paying the \$25 fine if they demonstrate that they obtained a child safety seat meeting the requirements of the law prior to the hearing.

HOUSE COMMITTEE APPROVES OMNIBUS TRANSPORTATION BILL: The House Transportation Committee approved an omnibus transportation bill April 28 that addresses

dozens of issues, including changes to Missouri's commercial drivers license laws. Senate Bill 1233, sponsored by Sen. Jon Dolan, R-Lake St. Louis.

The proposal would:

- Create the crime of driving a commercial motor vehicle with a revoked, suspended or cancelled license.
- Require applicants for a commercial drivers license to disclose the names of all states that have issued them a license during the previous 10 years. A person's CDL driving record would be required to contain a complete history of the driver, including information and convictions from other states.
- Prohibit individuals who have been issued commercial drivers licenses from having an alcohol-related offense expunged from their records. No federal, state, county municipal or local court can defer imposition of judgment or suspend imposition of sentence.
- Allow drivers having commercial licenses to be disqualified for driving under the influence of alcohol in noncommercial motor vehicles as well as commercial vehicles.
- Disqualify a driver of a commercial motor vehicle who causes a fatality due to negligent operation.
- Require the director of the Department of Revenue to disqualify any driver with a commercial drivers license who has been determined to be an imminent hazard by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation.

The changes in the commercial drivers license law would bring Missouri into compliance with federal requirements.

The bill also would require school bus drivers to submit two sets of fingerprints to obtain a special school bus endorsement on their drivers license. One set of prints would be used by the state Highway Patrol and one set would be used by the FBI to perform background checks.

In addition, the bill would allow staggered motor carrier registration. The proposal would enable motor carriers to register their vehicles at MoDOT's Motor Carrier Services Division throughout the year to more evenly distribute the workload involved in the registration process. Currently, motor-carrier registration can be done only during the last quarter of the year so all licensing work must be handled in the final three months of the year. This proposal is one of the MHTC's legislative priorities for the 2004 session.

The bill also would:

- Allow operators of low-speed vehicles to use public highways with a speed limit of less than 35 miles per hour. Cities and counties could pass ordinances to ban the use of low speed vehicles on roads within their boundaries.
- Allow commercial transport vehicles or railroad passenger cars stopped to load or unload passengers to use alternately flashing lights as warning signals.
- Exempt vehicles manufactured 26 years prior to the current model years from the emission inspection process.
- Create a number of special license plates including:
 - Amateur Radio plates

- Peace Officer plates
- Agriculture in the Classroom plates
- Kingdom of Calontir plates
- Firefighter plates
- U.S. Veteran plates
- Missouri Foxtrotting Horse Breed Association plates
- Daughters of the American Revolution plates
- Kids with Cancer plates
- Special Olympics plates
- Missouri Society of Professional Engineers plates
- Organ Donor plates
- Alpha Phi Omega plates
- Search and Rescue Council plates
- Former Legislators plates
- Boy Scout/ Girl Scout plates
- Camp Quality plates
- State Troopers Emergency Relief Society plates
- Lewis and Clark plates

Senate Bill 1233 now goes to the full House for consideration.

GOVERNOR VETOES TORT REFORM BILL: Gov. Bob Holden vetoed a tort reform bill April 27 that would have restricted injury lawsuits. Holden asked legislators to approve a more narrowly focused bill that addresses only medical malpractice lawsuits. The bill he vetoed included wrongful death, personal injury and liability cases.

According to Speaker of the House Catherine Hanaway, R-Warson Woods, the legislature will try to override the veto.

Only a small part of the bill, which would have changed joint and several liability law, would have affected MoDOT.

HOUSE COMMITTEE APPROVES NUMBER OF BILLS: The House Transportation Committee approved a number of bills April 28 including:

- House Bill 1690, sponsored by Rep. Robin Wright Jones, D-St. Louis, would require owners or operators of motor vehicle inspection stations to maintain liability insurance to cover possible damage to vehicles during the inspection process.
- House Bill 1688, sponsored by Rep. Jones, would require inspection stations conducting emissions testing for motor vehicles to maintain liability insurance to cover possible damage to vehicles during the testing process.
- House Bill 1715, sponsored by Rep. Bob May, R-Rolla, would designate a section of Highway 63 in Phelps County the Korean War Veterans Association Memorial Highway.
- House Bill 1283, sponsored by Rep. James Viebrock, R-Republic, would designate a section of Highway 60 in Springfield the Korean War Veterans' Freeway.

- House Bill 1663, sponsored by Rep. Therese Sander, R-Moberly, would establish a special license plate for immediate family of any member of the United State military killed in the line of duty.

The bills now go to the full House for consideration.

UPCOMING HEARINGS: The latest legislative hearing notices can be found at www.house.mo.gov; go to Hearings and choose either House Hearing Schedule or Senate Hearing Schedule.