
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 390

AN ACT CONCERNING GOLF CARTS, BLOOD TRANSPORT VEHICLES, WRONG-WAY SIGNS, THE USE OF TOWN AID ROAD GRANTS AND A MICROTRANSIT PILOT PROGRAM.

SUMMARY

This bill makes the following unrelated changes in the transportation statutes:

1. allows golf carts to cross state-owned roads located in municipalities that have authorized golf cart use on municipal roads (see BACKGROUND) (§ 1),
2. allows “blood transport vehicles” to use high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes under specified conditions and codifies the Office of the State Traffic Administration’s (OSTA) authority to designate and make rules for HOV lanes (§ 2),
3. makes engineering studies and planning services for flood mitigation and municipal stormwater planning eligible uses of town aid road (TAR) funds (§ 4), and
4. requires the Department of Transportation (DOT) to establish a microtransit pilot program (§ 5).

The bill also sets January 1, 2024, as the deadline by which DOT must finish installing wrong way signs on exit ramps from interstate highways that are prone to accidents, as required in the 2020 bond act (PA 20-1, § 40) (§ 3).

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except that the (1) golf cart and TAR provisions are effective July 1, 2022, and (2) HOV provision is effective October 1, 2022.

§ 1 — GOLF CARTS CROSSING STATE ROADS

The bill allows golf carts to cross state-owned roads in municipalities that have authorized golf cart use on municipal roads. It does so by exempting golf carts in this specific circumstance from the definition of motor vehicle, which allows them to operate unregistered. In practice, golf carts are considered unsuitable for public road use and therefore cannot be registered with the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Existing law already allows golf carts to cross state-owned roads to travel from one part of a golf course to another.

§ 2 — HOV LANES AND BLOOD TRANSPORT VEHICLES

Under existing agency practice, OSTA designates lanes on multi-lane limited access highways as HOV lanes and erects signs indicating the lanes and the rules for their use. The bill codifies this authority and allows OSTA to adopt regulations to implement the bill's provisions.

The bill also requires OSTA to allow "blood transport vehicles" to use HOV lanes, regardless of the number of passengers, when the vehicle is transporting human blood and blood products between a collection point and a hospital or storage center. A blood transport vehicle is a vehicle owned by a nonprofit general blood banking operation or state-licensed nonprofit blood collection facility and used to transport blood and blood products (e.g., plasma or platelets).

To use the HOV lane, the bill requires blood transport vehicles to display, on each side and the rear, a removable decal or sign indicating that it is transporting blood and blood products between a collection point and a hospital or storage center. The vehicle must also display the logo or emblem of the blood banking operation or collection facility, as applicable, on each side of the vehicle.

Federal law establishes HOV lane rules that states must follow, generally requiring that the lanes be restricted to vehicles with at least two occupants with certain exceptions (23 U.S.C. § 166). The recent federal infrastructure bill expanded these exceptions to include blood transport vehicles (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, P. L. 117-58, § 11527).

§ 5 — MICROTRANSIT PILOT PROGRAM

The bill requires the DOT commissioner to establish a pilot program to test microtransit services in the state, including in rural areas not currently served by public transportation. “Microtransit” is transportation by a multipassenger vehicle that uses a digital network or software application to offer fixed or dynamically allocated routes and schedules in response to individual or aggregate consumer demand. Under the bill, DOT may contract with third parties to provide microtransit services.

By January 1, 2025, the bill requires the DOT commissioner to submit a report to the Transportation Committee on the pilot program’s implementation and any recommendations for future use of microtransit services.

BACKGROUND

Municipal Authorization of Golf Carts

By law, municipalities may authorize the use of golf carts on roads under their jurisdiction, subject to the following conditions:

1. the permitted use must be on roads with a posted speed limit of 25 miles per hour or less and limited to daylight hours,
2. golf carts must be equipped with an operable horn that satisfies state legal requirements and a flag that helps drivers of other vehicles to see the cart, and
3. operators must carry a valid driver’s license (CGS § 14-300g(a)).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Transportation Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 33 Nay 2 (03/24/2022)