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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR: Vigil DATE TYPED: 1/13/03 HB 729/aH AFC

SHORT TITLE: Safe Routes to School Program SB _____

ANALYST: Reynolds-Forte

APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY03	FY04	FY03	FY04		
			Indeterminate	Recurring	State Road Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Duplicates SB556
Relates to SJM55

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Responses Received From

Highway and Transportation Department
State Department of Education

SUMMARY

Synopsis HAFC Amendment

The House Appropriation and Finance Committee Amendment to HB729 deletes the \$750.0 appropriation to the State Highway and Transportation Department. A safe routes to school program is still created within the State Highway and Transportation Department and states that that “the program shall be established to provide funding assistance to the state, counties and municipalities to identify safe school routes and to implement improvements including installing sidewalks, painting crosswalks, installing traffic signals, etc.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The amended bill requires the establishment of a program that would involve the development of evaluation criteria, application processes, procedures, and advertising for school routes safety improvements. However, without dedicated funds for this purpose, school route safety im-

provements would need to be brought through the normal local planning processes. State, counties and municipalities would need to work with Regional and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (RPO/MPO) to compete with other local transportation improvements.

Recommendations for school route safety improvements would need to be ranked as a priority by the local RPO/MPO, that recommendation endorsed by the appropriate District Engineer and then brought forward to the department for consideration for inclusion in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) and, if successful, entered into the program listing.

All projects submitted through the planning process would need to follow Federal Highway Administration specifications if the school route is located on the State Highway System. Projects that can provide safety-specific information (e.g. crash data, fatalities pedestrian accidents, etc.) may be eligible for Safety Funds.

The State Highway and Transportation Department notes that in essence, this legislation as now written, is tantamount to an unfunded mandate that will be in opposition to the department's planning procedures. Also the bill places an onus of establishing and advertising a program that will have very limited funding and little immediate effect.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

The State Highway and Transportation Department notes that HB726 as amended/HAFC requires involvement by the Bicycle, Pedestrian and equestrian Advisory Taskforce (BPE). The BPE is primarily composed of MPO representative and advocates along with technical advisors from the department. Since the legislation is "open-ended", this would burden the committee with an on-going mandate without a funding mechanism to fulfill the bill's intent of improving safety condition for those children who walk and bike to school.

Additionally, the amended bill requires the BPE to work in conjunction with school districts, law enforcement agencies, parents, teachers and school administrators. As currently drafted, the bill would bring together the right mix of input for suggesting improvements to the wrong departmental organization. Again, these improvement requests would need to follow planning processes and compete with other transportation improvements proposed for cities and counties.

Synopsis of Original Bill

HB729 creates a safe routes to school program within the State Highway and Transportation Department to increase and make safer a student's ability to walk or ride a bicycle to school. \$750.0 is appropriated to the State Highway and Transportation Department from the general fund for FY04 to implement the provisions of the safe routes to school program.

Significant Issues

The State Department of Education states that school bus services to and from school provide transportation to approximately 50% of all school-age children.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

\$750.0 is appropriated from the general fund to the State Highway and Transportation Department for FY04 to implement the program. Any funds unencumbered or unexpended at the end of the FY04 fiscal year will revert to the general fund.

HB729 establishes a program to provide funding assistance to the state, counties and municipalities to identify school route hazards and implement engineering improvements. If the program is to continue, funding will need to be recurring.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

State Highway and Transportation Department will be required to develop program evaluation criteria, application processes, disbursement policies and procedures, advertising and contracting for the program. The Department will also be required to establish contracting, billing and related accounting processes to administer this program.

DUPLICATION, RELATIONSHIP

SB556 and HB729 are duplicates. HB729 relates to SJM55 which requests the State Highway and Transportation Department to direct its efforts and federal funding toward making pedestrian and bicycle traffic safer and creating safe routes to schools.

PRF/njw:yr