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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 2/7/2006

SPONSOR Sanchez, M. LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____

SHORT TITLE Reduce Speed Limit & Define "Safety Corridor" SB 720

ANALYST McOlash

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY06	FY07		
	None		

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files
 Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS)
 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)

Responses Received From

NM Department of Transportation (NMDOT)
 Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC)
 Attorney General's Office (AGO)
 NM Taxation and Revenue Department (TRD)
 NM Department of Public Safety (DPS)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 720 amends 66-7-301 NMSA 1978 and allows the Department of Transportation to designate areas as a safety corridor. A safety corridor is defined as a highway segment with a five-year history of ten or more fatal or serious injury crashes. Double fines will apply in safety corridors. Double fines cannot be imposed or enforced until there has been conspicuous notice of the safety corridor designation for at least ten days prior to enforcement.

The bill also amends 66-7-301 NMSA 1978, 66-7-302.1 NMSA 1978 and 66-7-303 NMSA 1978 and lowers the maximum speed limit in the state to 65 miles per hour.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There will be administrative impacts in the time and effort required to procure, manufacture and install new traffic signs to address a change in maximum speeds estimated at \$270 thousand. In addition, there will be added administrative time associated with performing traffic-engineering studies to support the establishing of safety corridors.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Speeding-related crashes resulted in 13,192 fatalities in 2004. (NHTSA, 2005)

The economic costs of crashes that involved excessive speed were \$40.4 billion, representing 18 percent of total crash costs and an average cost of \$144 for every person in the United States. (NHTSA, 2002)

When speed increases from 40 mph to 60 mph, the energy released in a crash more than doubles. (IIHS, 2003)

Research by IIHS found that when speed limits were raised by many states in 1996, travel speeds increased and motor vehicle fatalities went up approximately 15 percent on Interstate highways in those states.

Alcohol and speeding are a deadly combination. In 2002, 42 percent of drivers with a Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) of .08 or higher involved in fatal crashes were speeding, compared to only 15 percent of sober drivers involved in fatal crashes. (NHTSA, 2003)

The DOT has adopted the practice of establishing posted speeds based on the 85th Percentile Speed which is the predominant engineering practice utilized by all of the DOT's in the United States. The 85th Percentile Speed is defined as the speed at or below which 85 percent of free-flowing vehicles travel. This measure is obtained through the conduct of an engineering speed study. Studies have shown that neither raising nor lowering the speed limit has much effect on vehicle speeds. In fact, percent compliance with the posted speed limit decreases when speed limits are reduced that are not supported by an engineering study. The only major effect on speeds is strict enforcement, which is a continual resource constraint on all states. Consequently, establishing the maximum speed limit at sixty-five (65) miles per hour on all facilities will likely introduce a greater degree of non-compliance and disregard for regulatory signing particularly on the interstate system.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

The definition of a safety corridor is not based upon the amount of traffic usage but the whether that area of the roadway has had ten or more fatal/serious injuries crashes within a five-year time span. There are no other criteria for designating a section of road a safety corridor. There are no provisions for the removal of a safety corridor designation.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Once a section is determined to be a safety corridor and a 5-year period has passed without any serious accident will the designation, be removed?