



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Transportation

Director's Office

355 Capitol St. NE, MS 11

Salem, OR 97301

DATE: March 16, 2021

TO: House Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Lindsay Baker, Assistant Director, Government and External Relations
Oregon Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: HB 3134 – Crash not Accident

INTRODUCTION

House Bill 3134 replaces references throughout Oregon Revised Statute of vehicle “accident” and vehicle “collision” with vehicle “crash.” While this change is technical in nature, language matters, and this measure provides alignment in statute to illustrate that a *crash is no accident*.

DISCUSSION

Many years ago, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration stopped referring to vehicle *crashes* as *accidents*. Since that time, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), has also moved away from the word *accident*, and adopted the word *crash*. As safety advocates, we’ve long understood that a crash is no accident, because crashes are almost always preventable. Almost all traffic crashes have a cause, and far too often that cause is human error. In Oregon, the leading cause of traffic crashes that result in death or serious injury is speeding, followed by alcohol or drug use, riding without a seat belt or car seat, and distracted driving. Often, traffic crashes involve more than one of these factors. All of these behaviors can easily be prevented, which is why it is so important to call these incidents a crash. You cannot prevent an accident. You can prevent a crash.

ODOT is pleased that HB 3134 would replace accident or collision with crash throughout the Oregon Revised Statutes. Making this change in statute reinforces the fact that most crashes are due to preventable human behaviors. Our partners at the local, regional, and national level, have all moved towards using the word crash, it is important for statute to reflect this change as well.

SUMMARY

It is essential to use every available tool when working to prevent death or serious injury from traffic crashes. HB 3134 removes the words accident and collision and replaces them with the word crash. Calling a traffic crash a crash helps reinforce the idea that crashes are preventable. A *crash is no accident*.

Thank you for your consideration and please feel free to reach out to me with any additional questions.