

SB 9 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Joint Committee On Transportation

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Meeting Dates: 4/7

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs field office staff in rural counties to prioritize, from among the applicants requesting a drive test for licensure, those applicants who are residents in the county where the field office is located or who live within 50 miles of the field office.

Fiscal impact: (info)

Revenue impact: (info)

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The Driver and Motor Vehicle Services Division (DMV) of the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) is the state entity responsible for regulation of motor vehicles and drivers. While many documents and services offered by DMV are available online, there are a few services which must necessarily be provided in person, most notably the behind-the-wheel driving test. Such a test requires that a DMV staff ride along with the applicant during the test, and also includes a pre-test inspection of vehicle equipment, which typically takes about 20 minutes. The test itself is designed to evaluate skills required for safe driving, including: knowledge of signs and traffic signals; ability to back up safely; awareness of surrounding environment; general control of vehicle; maintaining appropriate speed; proper use of signals; ability to safely execute lane changes and turns; how the driver handles unexpected obstacles; navigating uncontrolled intersections; and yielding. All of the aforementioned topics, and expectations, are laid out within the Oregon Driver Manual.

The fee for the behind-the-wheel test is \$45, in addition to the cost of the license or permit should the applicant pass the test. Drivers who complete an ODOT-approved driver education course within the previous two years are eligible to have the behind-the-wheel test waived. Because this test requires a DMV staff to spend a significant amount of time with a single applicant, including time completely off-site from the DMV field office, all such tests are conducted by appointment only. In addition, 16 DMV field offices do not offer the behind-the-wheel tests at all, requiring some applicants to travel to the next closest field office. Compounding these issues are staffing shortages at a number of DMV field offices that can sometimes leave an office unable to handle particular functions, or even force them to close entirely, on any given day due to worker absences due to illness or other causes. In some areas of the state, traveling to the next closest DMV office can be prohibitive.

Senate Bill 9 specifies that in 20 specified rural counties, DMV field offices must prioritize requests for behind-the-wheel tests from persons who are residents of the county where the office is located, or who live within 50 miles of the office in question.