

SB 1161 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

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Meeting Dates: 5/13, 5/15

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure directs the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to issue licenses for the operation of organ transport vehicles, sets criteria for an organ procurement organization to obtain a license, establishes standards for drivers of an organ transport vehicle, and grants privileges to organ transport vehicles including the use of lights and sirens.

Detailed Summary:

- Defines organ transport vehicle.
- Directs OHA to issue licenses to an organ procurement organization (OPO) for the purpose of licensing organ transport vehicles.
 - Permits OHA to establish rules for license and renewal fees and renewal requirements.
- Requires an organ transport vehicle operating in Oregon to be licensed by OHA.
 - Requires organ transport vehicles to be clearly and identifiably marked on all sides and provide proof of specified insurance coverage.
 - Requires OPOs to obtain a license for each organ transport vehicle they operate.
- Establishes requirements for drivers of an organ transplant vehicle, including:
 - Must be at least 25 years old;
 - Must be a current or former police officer, firefighter, or emergency medical services provider;
 - Must have at least five years of experience operating emergency vehicles;
 - Must hold a valid driver's license and pass a criminal background check;
 - Have one or fewer traffic offenses in any three-year period;
 - Must complete OHA-approved emergency vehicle operator and defensive driving courses; and
 - Must be employed or contracted by a licensed OPO to drive an organ transport vehicle.
 - Permits an organ procurement organization to require applicants to submit fingerprints for the purpose of completing a criminal background check.
- Grants exceptions allowing organ transport vehicles to use lights and sirens while responding to emergencies.
- Amends Oregon traffic laws to:
 - Require other drivers and pedestrians to yield to organ transport vehicles.
 - Allow organ transport vehicles to exceed speed limits and disregard certain traffic controls when responding to emergencies.
 - Require compliance with vehicle lighting and siren regulations.
 - Create Class B violations for interference with and failure to yield to an organ transport vehicle.
- Becomes operative on January 1, 2027. Takes effect on the 91st day following adjournment sine die.

Fiscal Impact: Has Minimal Fiscal Impact

Revenue Impact: No Revenue Impact

SENATE VOTE: Ayes, 29

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Impact of organ donation on recipients
- Ambulance utilization and organ transport
- Impact of traffic delays on transplant viability

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Organ transport is managed by a federally designated Organ Procurement Organization (OPO). In Oregon, this role is carried out by [Cascade Life Alliance](#). The OPO connects organ donors with patients awaiting transplants and coordinates transportation through various agencies ([U.S. Organ Procurement Org Oversight](#)). Nationwide Organ Recovery Transport Alliance ([NORA](#)), based in Illinois, is an organization that supports transportation and logistics services to facilitate organ transplants across many U.S. states, including Oregon and Washington. NORA offers proprietary vehicles equipped with commercial refrigeration units for the purpose of transporting tissue.

The mode of organ transportation varies depending on the distance and type of organ being transported, including transportation by air or ground. Organs for transport are appropriately preserved, packed on ice, and for certain organs, such as lungs and kidneys, placed on machines for transport. There is a specific process to ensure that each organ is labeled properly. Before leaving the hospital, all organs and related documentation are scanned, and the same process is repeated once the organ reaches its destination. The Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network establishes regulations for the preservation, packaging, and labeling of organs during transport.

Under current law, organ transport vehicles may not operate lights and sirens while transporting organs within Oregon. As of May 2023, organ transport vehicles operating in Washington may utilize lights and sirens when transporting a time-sensitive organ.

Senate Bill 1161 A directs the Oregon Health Authority to issue licenses for the operation of organ transport vehicles, sets criteria for an organ procurement organization to obtain a license, establishes standards for drivers of an organ transport vehicle, and grants privileges to organ transport vehicles including the use of lights and sirens.