
Transportation Committee

HB 1352

Brief Description: Apportioning railroad crossing installation and maintenance costs.

Sponsors: Representatives Murray, Ericksen and Romero; by request of Utilities & Transportation Commission.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Broadens purpose of the Grade Crossing Protective Account.
- Eliminates match requirements for projects up to \$20,000.
- Creates revenue stream for account, if needed.

Hearing Date: 2/5/03

Staff: Melissa Beard (786-7347).

Background:

In 1969, the Grade Crossing Protective Fund was created to provide funds for projects such as, improvements to signals and warning devices at public railroad crossings. The fund, administered by the Utilities and Transportation Commission, would pay for 60 percent of a project, the local or state government would pay for 30 percent of the project and the railroad would pay the remaining 10 percent. In the 1980's, the federal government increased their funding of these types of projects and required only a 1 percent match, which was paid for from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund.

Currently, many of the projects previously funded out of the Grade Crossing Protective Fund now receive federal funding to cover 100 percent of the costs. The majority of these projects are located at heavily traveled, public railroad crossings.

Finally, the fund received a one-time appropriation from the Motor Vehicle Fund and the only revenue generated is the interest earnings on the account.

Summary of Bill:

This bill would broaden the purpose of the fund to include all rail safety projects that pose a high risk to public safety but are less likely to be funded by federal dollars. Types of projects include pedestrian safety, private crossings, and other rail safety hazards.

The Commission has also found that smaller towns and smaller railroads are not able to pay the 30 percent and 10 percent matches, respectively, to fund projects. This bill would waive the matching requirement of projects under \$20,000.

Finally, a revenue stream for the account is created. The Commission will transfer money from their Public Service Revolving Fund's Miscellaneous Fees and Penalties Account, if needed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.