

Testimony by Loran Frazier, Montana Department of Transportation

HB 443 "An act limiting the boundaries of a highway construction zone"

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, for the record my name is Loran Frazier, Chief Engineer for the Department of Transportation. This bill concerns us for the following reasons:

- Currently we sign for two types of limits, work zones, and project limits.
- Project limits are signed at the beginning and end of the project. These signs identify the contract limits and are needed for insurance and legal reasons.
- There are at times, conditions within the project limits that dictate speed zones during project construction. These zones may have speed limits set for public safety reasons for time periods during the project. There may be detours, lane changes, temporary slopes, drop offs, loose gravel, slick or rough surfaces, or a host of other reasons for the limit.
- Work zones are signed where the work is actively being performed.
- In the detail drawings I handed out it takes at least 3000 feet of signs to warn motorists and get them to react to slow down for a work zone. About 29 seconds at 70 mph. We can't fit our signs in the 1500 feet and the reaction time would be cut in half.
- Limiting a work zone to the length mentioned in the bill will require many separate work zones to be signed driving up the cost of signs.
- The construction practices will be limited to short areas, driving up the cost of production. An example would be a 10 mile reconstruction project with 10 culvert crossings and excavation activities. Up to 12 different sign set-ups would be needed under this bill versus 3 to 4.
- Signing so many short zones will lead to more driver confusion or complacency by the increased number of signs.
- It would make it more difficult to distinguish between project limits – construction zones and actual work zones.

Our current practices of signing are approved by FHWA, conform with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). This manual is used throughout the US and included sufficient spacing for warning signs and speed zones.