

Committee on Transportation

HB 7027 — Department of Transportation

by Transportation and Ports Subcommittee; and Rep. Rooney and others (CS/CS/SB 756 by Appropriations Committee; Transportation Committee; and Senator Brandes)

The bill contains the Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) 2016 Legislative Package, as well as additional transportation-related provisions. More specifically, the bill:

- Creates the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Financing Corporation, a nonprofit corporation, for the purpose of financing or refinancing projects in the FDOT's work program through one or more service contracts, under which the corporation is authorized to issue bonds and other forms of indebtedness secured by payments to the corporation by the FDOT.
- Requires the FDOT to consult with and provide information to the Division of Bond Finance (DBF) in connection with a proposal to finance or refinance a transportation facility through the FDOT's authority to enter into public-private partnerships, and authorizes the DBF to make an independent recommendation.
- Increases from \$15 million to \$25 million the minimum annual funding for the Florida Seaport Transportation and Economic Development Program.
- Subjects any FDOT work program amendment adding a new project, or project phase, to the adopted work program in excess of \$3 million to Legislative Budget Commission (LBC) approval; requires any work program amendment submitted under s. 339.135(7)(h), F.S. to include, as supplemental information, a list of projects, or project phases, in the current five-year adopted work program that are eligible for the funds within the appropriation category being utilized for the proposed amendment; and requires the FDOT to provide a narrative with the rationale for not advancing an existing project or project phase in lieu of the proposed amendment.
- Removes authorization for the chair and vice chair of the LBC to approve an amendment to the work program if an LBC meeting cannot be held within 30 days.
- Authorizes the FDOT to assume certain review responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act with respect to highway projects.
- Expressly authorizes an existing, federally approved business development program for highway projects within the FDOT, which is intended to assist small businesses, increase competition, and reduce costs.
- Authorizes the transfer of the FDOT's Pinellas Bayway System to become part of the turnpike system and, in such event, also requires the transfer of certain funds to be used to help fund the costs of repair and replacement of the transferred facilities.
- Repeals certain provisions of the Laws of Florida relative to the Pinellas Bayway System.
- Deletes obsolete references to certain toll facilities.
- Defines the term "port-of-entry," allows commercial motor vehicle (CMV) operators to purchase temporary CMV registration permits at certain port-of-entry locations, and provides for a reduced non-registration penalty under certain circumstances.

The bill also makes several statutory changes specific to the operation and regulation of autonomous vehicles, including:

- Clarifying that the authorization for a person holding a valid driver license to operate an autonomous vehicle applies on the public roads of this state.
- Revising provisions regarding the operation of autonomous vehicles on roads for testing purposes.
- Revising equipment requirements for autonomous vehicles, requiring a system to alert an operator of a technology failure and to take control, or to stop the vehicle under certain conditions.
- Prohibiting operation of a motor vehicle on the highways of this state while the vehicle is in motion if the vehicle is actively displaying moving television broadcast or pre-recorded video entertainment content visible from the driver's seat, unless the vehicle is equipped with autonomous technology and is being operated in autonomous mode.
- Providing that an electronic display used by an operator of a vehicle equipped with autonomous technology or by an operator of a vehicle equipped with driver-assistive truck platooning technology is not prohibited.
- Defining the term "driver-assistive truck platooning technology;" requiring the FDOT to study, in consultation with the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (FDHSMV), the use and safe operation of driver assistive truck platooning technology; and authorizing a pilot project to test vehicles equipped with such technology.
- Requiring manufacturers of such technology to provide insurance before the start of the pilot project and requiring the FDOT, in consultation with the FDHSMV, to report the results of the study and any findings or recommendations from the pilot project.
- Requiring metropolitan planning organizations to accommodate advances in vehicle technology when developing long-range transportation plans and requiring the FDOT to accommodate advances in vehicle technology when updating the Strategic Intermodal System Plan.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2016.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 118-0