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Bill Analysis
Legislative Service Commission

H.B. 607
123rd General Assembly
(As Introduced)

Rep. Robinson

BILL SUMMARY

- Permits the Public Utilities Commission to approve the use of an audible warning system as an alternative to the whistle and bell required under current law to warn of an approaching locomotive engine, but only if it determines that the alternative audible warning system complies with applicable federal requirements.
- If the Commission approves the use of an alternative audible warning system, permits such a system to be sounded in lieu of a whistle and bell when a locomotive approaches any type of crossing.

CONTENT AND OPERATION

The sounding of an audible warning by a locomotive

Current law requires every railroad locomotive to be equipped with a bell and a steam or compressed air whistle. When an engine approaches a public crossing, or a private crossing where the view of the crossing is obstructed, the person in charge of the engine must sound the whistle at a distance of between 80 and 100 rods from the crossing and ring the bell continuously until the engine passes the crossing. (R.C. 4955.32.) (See **COMMENT.**)

Under the bill, in lieu of sounding a whistle and ringing a bell as required by current law, the person in charge of an engine approaching a public or obstructed private crossing could activate an alternative audible warning system, if one is approved by the Public Utilities Commission (R.C. 4955.32(B)(2)).

The bill states that the establishment of an alternative audible warning system would not preclude the sounding of a whistle by a person in charge of an engine in an emergency situation, as determined by the sole judgment of that person (R.C. 4955.32(D)).

Alternative warning systems and the Public Utilities Commission

The bill permits the Public Utilities Commission to evaluate alternative systems for providing an audible warning of an approaching locomotive engine. It may approve the use of an audible warning system as an alternative to the whistle and bell required under current law, but *only* if it determines that the alternative audible warning system complies with applicable federal requirements for an audible warning of an approaching train. The Commission must establish guidelines for the use and operation of any alternative audible warning system it approves. (R.C. 4955.321.)

COMMENT

A rod is 16.5 linear feet; therefore, 80 to 100 rods equals 1,320 to 1,650 feet, or 440 to 550 yards.

HISTORY

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