

LFC Requester:

Noah Montano

NMDOT BILL ANALYSIS 2025 REGULAR SESSION

{Include the bill no. in the email subject line, e.g., HB2, and only attach one bill analysis and related documentation per email message}

SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

{Indicate if analysis is on an original bill, amendment, substitute, or a correction of a previous bill}

Check all that apply:

Original Amendment
Correction Substitute

Date Prepared: 2/10/2025

Bill No. SB 226

Sponsor: George K. Muñoz

Agency/ Code: NMDOT - 805 - OGC

Person Writing Analysis: Sean J. Fitting

Short Title Truck Tractor Max Speed Limit

Phone: (505) 690-5191 Email: Sean.Fitting@dot.nm.gov

SECTION II: FISCAL IMPACT

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Not applicable.

REVENUE (dollars in thousands)

Not applicable.

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY26	FY27	FY28	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total	\$560,0+	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	N/A	Road Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SECTION III: NARRATIVE

BILL SUMMARY

Senate Bill 226 (SB 226) creates a new 65 mph speed limit for truck tractors, as defined in Section 66-1-4-17 and Section 66-1-4(B) NMSA, with a penalty assessment of \$250 for violation.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

SB 226 will require that the NMDOT replace all speed limit signs to reflect different maximum speeds for passenger vehicles and truck tractors. Approximately 700 speed limit signs along New

Mexico highways would need to be supplemented with additional signs to show the speed limit for truck tractors. Each sign costs approximately \$800.00 to make and install. The impact on the Road Fund for making and installing the supplemental signs would be approximately \$560,000.

Additionally, NMDOT would likely need to create a safety outreach program to help educate drivers of truck tractors about the new speed limit. It is difficult to estimate the cost of this sort of public notice campaign, but it is not expected to be significant.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Whether reducing the speed of truck tractors provides any definite safety benefit is an open question. Proponents of reducing the speed of truck tractors contend that doing so may potentially reduce the number and severity of crashes involving truck tractors. Between 2022 and 2023 heavy trucks were involved in 3,235 (7.9 percent) motor vehicle crashes in New Mexico. Furthermore, crashes involving heavy trucks account for 17.8 percent of the traffic fatalities in 2022. Reduced speeds provide for better driver control of the vehicle, as well as less kinetic energy should a crash occur, decreasing the severity of the crash.

If reduced speed for truck tractors does serve to reduce crashes or the severity of crashes, this may also reduce the NMDOT's tort liability. Between 2022 and 2023 NMDOT was named as a defendant in 10 tort cases resulting from truck tractor crashes. Additionally, if reducing the speed of truck tractors does reduce the number of crashes involving truck tractors, this may also increase the safety for NMDOT workers working in the roadway.

However, contrary to the perception that reduced speeds for truck tractors will reduce crashes, the Crash Modification Factor Clearinghouse maintained by FHWA shows no Crash Reduction Factor for maximum speed limits. Further, a literature search for safety effects of maximum speed limits for truck tractors did not reveal any documented safety improvements. Another factor is the well-known concept that differential speeds can cause crashes. This legislation could potentially result in at least a 10 mph speed differential between truck tractors and other vehicles on interstates, leading potentially to speed differential related crashes as well as additional congestion.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

None identified.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

In its typical operations, NMDOT's requirement for implementing new safety measures requires that a data driven approach be used. SB 226 does not take such an approach, which could put the measures of the bill at odds with data driven engineering.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Because New Mexico has mountainous terrain, truck tractors hauling heavy loads tend to drive faster downhill to gain momentum to climb the next hill. This may mean reducing the downhill speed slightly will result in severe reductions of speed up hill for truck tractors. This may serve to cause additional congestion on New Mexico highways.

ALTERNATIVES

None identified.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

Truck tractors will continue to be subject the same speed limits as passenger vehicles.

AMENDMENTS

Increasing penalty assessment as the speed above 65 mph increases might discourage faster driving. As SB 226 is written, a truck tractor driving 67 mph is subject to the same penalties as a truck tractor driving 100 mph.

Applying the reduced speed limits to freeways, or highways with speed limits above 65 miles per hour for all vehicles would limit the cost of sign replacement. It is not clear if the reduced speed limit for truck tractors would apply on all highways, or only on highways with a posted speed limit of over 65 mph. Adding language stating that existing speed limits for all other highway situations, such as school zones, construction zones, urban areas and county roads are still applicable would add clarity.

SB 226 establishes a maximum speed limit for all truck tractors with or without a trailer(s) or load. The bill could further define a truck tractor that must obey the maximum speed limit by the number of axels on the truck.