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## OLR Bill Analysis

### sSB 413

#### **AN ACT REVISING VARIOUS MOTOR VEHICLE STATUTES.**

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## **SUMMARY**

This law makes various changes to motor vehicle and transportation laws. A section-by-section analysis follows.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026, except that (1) the platform carrier provisions are effective July 1, 2026, and (2) the Q endorsement provision is effective January 1, 2027.

### **§§ 1 & 2 — ACCESSIBLE PARKING PLACARDS**

*Requires DMV to redesign placards so the expiration date is prominent; specifies that the Accessible Parking Advisory Council's duty to make educational materials includes videos or online trainings; and requires that people who certify eligibility for placards select which criterion an applicant meets*

The bill modifies laws on accessible parking application forms, placard design, and the duties of the Accessible Parking Advisory Council.

#### ***Placard Design***

The bill requires the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), in consultation with the Accessible Parking Advisory Council, to redesign the accessible parking windshield placard so the placard's expiration date is in bold font, prominent, and clearly visible from outside the vehicle. Starting January 1, 2027, DMV must only issue placards in the redesigned format, but previously issued placards that are otherwise valid remain so until they expire.

#### ***Advisory Council Duties***

Under current law, the Accessible Parking Advisory Council must make educational materials for medical professionals, law enforcement officers, and the general public about proper placard issuance and use. The bill specifies that these materials include videos or online trainings.

#### ***Placard Application Form***

By law, applicants for accessible parking placards must submit DMV's application form, which generally must be signed by a qualified person (such as a physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse) to certify that the applicant meets the definition of a person with a disability that limits his or her ability to walk and,

consequently, is eligible for a placard. Anyone who signs the form does so under penalty of false statement.

In practice, the application form lists the criteria contained in this definition and requires the person certifying the applicant's eligibility to sign under the criteria. The bill (1) codifies the requirement that the form list each eligibility criterion in this definition and (2) requires the form to also instruct the person certifying eligibility to initial which criterion the applicant meets. It also requires the form to contain a QR (quick response) code or something similar that allows health professionals and others who use it to access educational materials the advisory council develops on eligibility requirements.

As under existing law, certifications by health care professionals must be based on their professional opinion after completing a medically reasonable assessment of the applicant's medical history and current condition in the context of a bonafide health care professional-patient relationship.

***Background—Disability that Limits or Impairs Ability to Walk***

By law, a person has a disability that limits or impairs ability to walk if the person:

1. cannot walk 200 feet without resting;
2. cannot walk without (a) the use of a cane, brace, crutch, prosthetic device, wheelchair, or other assistive device or (b) help from another person;
3. is restricted by lung disease so that his or her forced respiratory volume or arterial oxygen tension is below certain limits;
4. uses portable oxygen;
5. has a heart condition that creates functional limitations falling within the American Heart Association's Class III or IV severity classification; or

6. is “severely limited” in walking ability due to an arthritic, neurological, or orthopedic condition (23 CFR 1235.2).

### **§ 3 — RECIPROCITY FOR Q ENDORSEMENT**

*Requires DMV to waive the skills test requirement for a Q endorsement to operate a fire apparatus for people that have an out-of-state credential that is substantially equivalent, as determined by the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control*

By law, a Q license endorsement indicates that a person is qualified to operate fire apparatus. To get an endorsement, a person generally must pass a skills test, but the test is waived for people with qualifying military training and experience.

The bill requires DMV to waive the skills test requirement and issue a Q endorsement to out-of-state license holders that have a substantially equivalent credential from that state. The Commission on Fire Prevention and Control determines which states’ credentials have standards that meet or exceed Connecticut’s standards and so qualify for reciprocity.

### **§ 4 — E-SCOOTER WEIGHT LIMIT**

*Increases current law’s e-scooter weight limit from 100 pounds to 110 pounds*

The bill increases current law’s weight limit for “electric scooters” (e-scooters) from 100 pounds to 110 pounds. In addition to meeting the weight limit, existing law defines an e-scooter as a device that (1) has two or three wheels and handlebars, (2) is designed to be ridden in an upright or seated position, (3) is powered by an electric motor and human power, and (4) has a maximum speed of up to 20 mph, with or without human propulsion on a paved level surface. E-bikes and one-wheeled vehicles are not considered e-scooters.

Existing law excludes e-bikes and e-scooters from the definition of a motor-driven cycle. (E-bikes and e-scooters are regulated more similarly to bicycles.)

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

## § 5 — VEHICLE RENTALS

*Adds open air all-terrain, sport, and convertible to the list of vehicle categories for which a car rental company may require a customer to provide a credit card before renting*

Existing law generally prohibits short-term car rental companies from requiring customers to show proof of a credit card as a condition for renting a vehicle. However, it allows them to require this proof for (1) passenger motor vehicles ACRISS (formerly, the Association of Car Rental Industry System Standards) or a successor organization classify as full-size elite, premium, premium elite, luxury, luxury elite, oversize, or special or (2) sport utility vehicles designed to transport six or more people.

The bill additionally allows these car rental companies to require proof of a credit card to rent vehicles ACRISS classifies as open air all-terrain, sport, or convertible.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

## § 6 — ELECTRONIC ISSUANCE LICENSEES

*Allows electronic issuance licensees to charge an additional fee for the optional service of document preparation and consultation services for corrections to title certificates and lien recordings; requires licensees that have a business website to prominently disclose certain information on the website, including the availability of these optional services and the associated fees.*

Existing law sets a regulatory framework for people and entities that are engaged in the business of electronically filing, on behalf of their customers, registration or title applications with DMV (registration and title companies). Among other things, it (1) generally prohibits registration and title companies from filing registration and title applications electronically without an “electronic issuance license” and (2) caps the fee that electronic issuance licensees may charge their customers at \$25 for each registration or title application.

The bill allows electronic issuance licensees to charge an additional fee that exceeds the \$25 cap for the optional service of document preparation and consultation services for corrections to title certificates and lien recordings if:

1. before performing the optional service, the licensee separately

discloses the service and the customer agrees to it, in writing; and

2. the licensee does not require the customer to buy the optional service as a condition of electronically filing the customer's registration or title application with DMV.

The bill also requires electronic issuance licensees that have a business website to prominently disclose on the website (1) a statement that the licensee is not affiliated with DMV, (2) a statement that a person may complete transactions on DMV's website at no additional charge, and (3) the availability of the optional services described above and the associated fees.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

## **§ 7 — LOCAL BRIDGE PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY**

*Expands the definition of "eligible bridges" that may receive grants under the state's Local Bridge Program*

The Local Bridge program gives grants to municipalities to remove, replace, reconstruct, rehabilitate, or improve local bridges. By law, the Department of Transportation (DOT) commissioner makes a priority list of eligible bridges, based on their physical condition, and awards grants to municipalities in the order of priority (CGS § 13a-175s).

The bill expands the program's definition of "eligible bridge" to also include structures (1) with a clear span more than six feet wide that include a permanent overhead structure enclosing a public right-of-way and (2) that the commissioner determines need to be removed, replaced, reconstructed, rehabilitated, or improved due to their physical condition.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

## **§ 8 — E-BIKE HELMET REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILDREN**

*Eliminates the infraction penalty for children under age 16 who do not wear a helmet on an e-bike, conforming to the existing law requiring children to wear helmets on bicycles and similar forms of transportation*

Current law on e-bikes specifically prohibits anyone from riding an e-bike (including as a passenger) without wearing a helmet meeting

certain specifications and subjects violators to an infraction penalty. Separately, existing law, unchanged by the bill, prohibits children age 17 or younger from riding an e-bike (or bicycles, non-motorized scooters, skateboards, e-scooters, or roller or in-line skates) on the traveled portion of any road without a helmet meeting these specifications. This law specifies that failing to do so is not (1) a violation or offense or (2) considered to be contributory negligence on the parent's or child's part or admissible in any civil action. However, it allows a law enforcement officer to issue a verbal warning to the parent or guardian of a child that does not wear a helmet as required.

The bill aligns these two provisions of law by specifying that (1) the law's infraction penalty only applies to people age 16 or older who ride an e-bike (including as a passenger) without a helmet and (2) failing to comply with existing law's prohibition on children under age 16 riding a class 3 e-bike (see *Background – E-bike Classes*), or sitting on one as a passenger without a helmet, does not constitute a violation or offense. Relatedly, it (1) applies the provisions described above on contributory negligence and civil actions to a child's failure to wear a helmet as a class 3 e-bike passenger and (2) allows a law enforcement officer to issue a verbal warning to the parent or guardian of a child that does not comply with the class 3 e-bike provisions described above.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

### ***Background – E-bike Classes***

By law, an e-bike is a bicycle that (1) has operable foot pedals and an electric motor of less than 750 watts and (2) qualifies as a class 1, class 2, or class 3 bicycle (see table below).

#### **E-Bike Classes**

<b><i>Class</i></b>	<b><i>Motor Engagement</i></b>	<b><i>Motor Disengagement</i></b>	<b><i>Top Speed</i></b>
Class 1	Only while the rider uses the foot pedals	When the rider stops pedaling or when it hits the top speed	20 mph

<b>Class</b>	<b>Motor Engagement</b>	<b>Motor Disengagement</b>	<b>Top Speed</b>
Class 2	While the rider pedals or with a throttle (they may be powered exclusively by the motor)	When the brakes are applied or when it hits the top speed	20 mph
Class 3	Only while the rider uses the foot pedals	When the rider stops pedaling or when it hits the top speed	28 mph

Source: CGS § 14-1

## **§§ 9-21 — STUDENT TRANSPORTATION BY PLATFORM CARRIERS**

The bill generally allows school boards to contract with companies (“platform carriers”) that use a digital network to arrange student transportation provided by drivers (“platform drivers”) who subcontract with the platform carrier to transport students in a passenger motor vehicle (“platform vehicles”) the platform driver owns or leases. However, for the 2026-27 school year, platform carriers may only arrange transport for homeless children and youth (which school boards must do under the federal McKinney Vento Act) and children in foster care.

It generally incorporates these carriers, vehicles, and drivers into existing laws on student transportation vehicles (STVs) and drivers and school transportation safety requirements, but makes several exceptions explained further below.

### **Regulation of Platform Carriers**

The bill generally expands the definition of “carrier” under the school transportation laws to include platform carriers who are under contract with a school board to provide student transportation with platform drivers. Under the bill, a “platform carrier” is a company that arranges student transportation for school or school activities using an online-enabled application, website, or system (“digital network”) and passenger motor vehicles meeting certain criteria (platform vehicles, see below).

In doing so, the bill applies carriers’ existing statutory and regulatory responsibilities to platform carries. These include requirements to (1)

review DMV's reports of suspended school transportation endorsement holders, (2) conduct random drug testing of drivers, (3) inspect and maintain vehicles, (4) ensure drivers meet all training requirements, and (5) appoint a safety coordinator to ensure compliance with carrier responsibilities. Under current law, carriers have these responsibilities with respect to their employees; the bill generally extends them to include carriers' subcontractors.

### ***Regulation of Platform Drivers***

By law, STV drivers must hold a "V" endorsement on their driver's license. To get an endorsement, drivers must, among other things, (1) undergo a criminal records check, state child abuse and neglect registry check and a driving history check; (2) meet medical qualifications; and (3) complete pre-service and in-service training requirements. By incorporating platform vehicles into the STV definition, the bill applies these requirements to platform drivers.

### ***Regulation of Platform Vehicles***

Under existing law, STVs have to be registered, inspected, insured, and meet signage and other safety requirements. The bill generally extends these requirements to platform vehicles, but with a few exceptions.

***Registration, Inspection, and Insurance.*** Currently, a vehicle used as an STV must get an STV registration. The law requires STV registrations to be renewed annually, and safety inspections are required before initial registration and renewal. The bill excludes platform vehicles from the STV registration requirement but establishes a separate annual inspection requirement for platform vehicles.

The bill also explicitly subjects platform vehicles to the same insurance requirements applicable to STVs but requires that the platform carrier hold the insurance rather than the driver. Existing law prohibits DMV from registering any STV (including a platform vehicle) if the vehicle does not meet insurance requirements. (It is unclear how DMV will comply with this prohibition. Because platform vehicles will be registered as passenger motor vehicles, DMV is unlikely to know that

the vehicle is an STV subject to these requirements and restrictions.)

Unlike with vehicles registered as STVs, these requirements are not enforced through the registration process. Instead, the bill requires school boards to confirm that each platform vehicle used under contract with them meets the inspection and insurance requirements. Before transportation under the contract begins, school boards must (1) get documentation showing the carrier’s compliance and maintain it for the contract’s term and (2) require platform carriers to notify the board promptly if any platform vehicle no longer meets these requirements.

**Vehicle Markings and Signage.** Current law requires STVs to display signs that say “Carrying School Children” and are either portable signs mounted on the roof or decal or painted signs. The bill requires platform vehicles to have these signs but allows them to be magnetic or otherwise temporarily attached to the vehicle or displayed in another DMV-approved method.

The bill also excludes platform vehicles from provisions requiring STVs to have the STV operator’s name, phone number, and STV fleet number painted on the vehicle’s side and rear.

## **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Transportation Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 35 Nay 1 (03/16/2026)