

**AN ACT** concerning certain highway entry or exit ramps and schools and supplementing Title 27 of the Revised Statutes and Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

**BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. This act shall be known and may be cited as "Terrell James' Law."
2. The Legislature finds and declares that:
  - a. The safety of the State's school children is of paramount importance.
  - b. Given the school facilities needs of Abbott districts, as defined pursuant to section 3 of P.L.1996, c.138 (C.18A:7F-3), particular sensitivity is required for the safety of children attending schools in those districts.
  - c. The Department of Transportation must exercise the utmost care when considering any proposal to plan, design, or construct a highway entry or exit ramp within 1,000 feet of a school.
  - d. A local board of education, and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority in the case of a school to be constructed by the authority pursuant to P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-1 et al.), or a board of a nonpublic school must also exercise the utmost care when considering any proposal to plan, design, or construct a school within 1,000 feet of a highway entry or exit ramp.
3. As used in this act:
 

"Department" means the Department of Transportation.

"Highway" means a highway which is designated part of the Interstate System as provided in Title 23 of the United States Code, or is a limited access highway as defined in section 1 of P.L.1945, c.83 (C.27:7A-1).

"School" means a public or nonpublic school containing any of the grades kindergarten through 12.

  4. a. A new entry or exit ramp shall not be constructed as part of a highway project if a school is located or is being constructed within 1,000 feet of the proposed location of the entry or exit ramp, unless, during the planning and design of the project, the department determines that the construction is required and that there is no feasible or prudent alternative.
  - b. Prior to making the determination required pursuant to subsection a. of this section, the department shall, as part of its community outreach efforts to identify a preferred alternative design for the highway project, notify the local board of education in whose district the school is located or being constructed, and in the case of a school being constructed by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, the authority, or in the case of a nonpublic school, the board thereof, the Department of Education and the members of the Legislature representing the district in which the school is located or being constructed, that the department is considering the construction of an entry or exit ramp within 1,000 feet of the school. The preferred alternative design for the highway project shall not be selected until the members of the Legislature notified pursuant to this subsection have been afforded the opportunity to submit comments to the department. If the department subsequently determines that the construction of the entry or exit ramp is required and that there is no feasible or prudent alternative, pedestrian safety issues shall be included as part of the environmental review undertaken by the department pursuant to State and federal laws, rules and regulations. When the public forum is held as part of the environmental review of the proposed highway project, the department shall present its plan for any entry or exit ramp and the safety measures, consistent with the recommendations of the study required pursuant to section 7 of this act, that are to be included in the highway project.
  - c. An entry or exit ramp for a highway shall not be reconstructed if a school is located or being constructed within 1,000 feet of the location of the ramp unless the department shall take steps to minimize the public safety hazards of the reconstructed ramp, consistent with the recommendations contained in the study required pursuant to section 7 of this act.
  5. a. A school shall not be constructed within 1,000 feet of an existing entry or exit ramp of a highway unless, during the planning and design of the proposed school, the local board of education and, in the case of a school to be constructed by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, the authority, or, in the case of a nonpublic school, the board thereof, determines that there is no feasible or prudent alternative. Prior to making this determination, the local board of education and, in the case of a school to be constructed by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, the authority, or, in the case of a nonpublic school, the board thereof, shall notify the members of the Legislature representing the district in which the school is proposed to be constructed and the Departments of Transportation and Education that construction of a school is being considered within 1,000 feet of the entry or exit ramp of a highway. The legislators shall be afforded the opportunity to submit comments to the local board of education, and, in the case of a school being constructed by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, the authority, or the board of the nonpublic school, as the case may be, and the Departments of Transportation and Education. If the determination is subsequently made that there is no feasible or prudent alternative, the Department of Transportation shall be so notified and the Department of Transportation shall review the proposed location of the school, identify potential safety hazards, and make recommendations to abate or minimize such hazards consistent with the study required pursuant to section 7 of this act, or if the study is not completed, consistent with such preliminary findings and recommendations which may exist. The Department of Transportation shall complete its review within 90 days of receiving notification of the determination, and shall report its findings to the local board of education and, in the case of a school being constructed by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, to the authority, or to the board of the nonpublic school, the Department of Education and the members of the Legislature representing the legislative district in which the school is proposed to be constructed.
  - b. As a condition of granting approval of a proposed school facilities project, the Department of Education shall require a local board of education to include with a board's application for approval: (1) a certification that the proposed school is not within 1,000 feet of an entry or exit ramp of a highway; or (2) a response to each item of advice to mitigate safety hazards that the Department of Transportation has issued based on the Department of Transportation's review of the school project.
  6. For the purpose of determining the distance between a highway ramp and a school pursuant to sections 4 and 5 of this act, the distance of 1,000 feet between a school and a highway entry or exit ramp shall be measured along the roadway from the school property line closest to the proposed ramp to the beginning of the full lane width of a deceleration lane or the end of the full lane width of an acceleration lane. The distance of 1,000 feet shall be measured along the center line of the traveled way of the roadway not the straight line distance between two points.
  7. a. The department, in consultation with the Department of Education, shall conduct a statewide study to identify public safety hazards posed by highway entry or exit ramps located within 1,000 feet of a school. The study shall include recommendations to abate such safety hazards for existing ramps and recommendations to avoid or minimize such safety hazards when designing or reconstructing ramps. In addition, the study shall include specific recommendations to abate student pedestrian safety hazards at highway entry or exit ramps located within 1,000 feet of a school that is planned for continued use or expansion. No later than two years after the effective date of this act, the study required by this subsection shall be transmitted to the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the General Assembly, the members of the Legislature, the metropolitan planning organizations designated within the State, and the Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration.
  - b. Requests to fund improvements that address safety hazards at highway entry or exit ramps shall be included, to the extent eligible, in the report of proposed projects to be financed by the New Jersey Transportation Trust Fund Authority and required to be submitted annually pursuant to section 22 of P.L.1984, c.73 (C.27:1B-22) by the Commissioner of Transportation.
  8. This act shall not apply to highway projects for which preliminary design has been completed and for which environmental work has commenced on or before the effective date of this act.
  9. This act shall take effect immediately, except that sections 5 and 6 shall take effect 180 days after enactment, and section 4 shall take effect on the date the study is transmitted as required by section 7 of this act.

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Concerns location of certain highway entry or exit ramps and schools.