

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6404

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Transportation, January 23, 1996

**Title:** An act relating to metric weights and measures.

**Brief Description:** Showing metric equivalents for English weights and measures.

**Sponsors:** Senators Prentice, Prince, Owen and Wood; by request of Department of Transportation.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Transportation: 1/18/96, 1/23/96 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Owen, Chair; Goings, Haugen, Morton, Oke, Prentice, Prince, Rasmussen, Sellar, Thibaudeau and Wood.

**Staff:** Gary Lebow (786-7304)

**Background:** The federal Metric Conversion Act of 1975 declared a national policy of coordinating and encouraging the increased use of the metric system and provided for a U.S. metric board to coordinate the voluntary conversion to the metric system.

A 1988 amendment to the act declared that the metric system is the preferred system of weights and measures. It also required each federal agency to convert to the metric system and to the extent possible, by the end of 1992 for procurements, grants and business related activities.

A 1991 executive order charges the U.S. Department of Commerce to direct and coordinate the metric conversion. Each federal agency is directed to use metrics to the extent economically feasible by September 30, 1992, increase metric understanding through educational information, cooperate with affected parties, and formulate metric transition plans to be placed in effect by November 30, 1991.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) formed a metric work group which developed a conversion plan and a timetable that was formally approved on October 31, 1991. The FHWA plan is intended to lead to complete metric implementation by September 30, 1996. All federal and federal-aid contracts are to be designed and advertised using the metric measurement system. FHWA does allow exemptions on a project by project basis.

The National Highway System Designation Act of 1995 extended the metric compliance date to October 1, 2000 and does not allow FHWA to penalize states that are in noncompliance with participation goals by September 30, 1996.

**Summary of Bill:** All Washington State statutes that have English weights and measures and affect the Department of Transportation are amended to show the metric equivalent in parentheses next to the English measurement. The only exception is that speed limits are shown in English measurement only (mph).

The metric conversions are for informational purposes only and in all cases the existing English measurements control in a situation requiring precise measurement.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** This bill will help and support our metrication efforts and accommodate our goal of updating all manuals and plans to metric by October 1, 1996.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Dennis Jackson, State Materials Engineer, WDSOT (pro).