

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6822

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 11, 2008

Title: An act relating to establishing goals to reduce vehicle miles traveled.

Brief Description: Establishing goals to reduce vehicle miles traveled.

Sponsors: Senators Murray, Pridemore, Kline, Kohl-Welles, McAuliffe and Sheldon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/29/08, 2/11/08 [DPS, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6822 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Marr, Vice Chair; Murray, Vice Chair; Swecker, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, Berkey, Eide, Jacobsen, Kastama, Kauffman, Kilmer, Sheldon and Spanel.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Delvin, Holmquist and King.

Staff: David Ward (786-7341)

Background: On February 7, 2007, the Governor issued an executive order establishing goals for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, increasing clean energy sector jobs, and reducing expenditures on imported fuel.

During the 2007 Legislative session, the Legislature passed Substitute Senate Bill (SSB) 6001 codifying most of the goals set forth in the Order including achievement of GHG emissions reductions of 50 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.

In response to the Order and enactment of SSB 6601, the Washington Climate Advisory Team (CAT) was established to measure and report on 1990 GHG emission levels as well as develop policy recommendations on how the state can achieve the statutory goal of reducing GHG emissions reductions to 50 percent of 1990 levels by 2050.

In a draft report issued on December 21, 2007, the CAT identified reduction of Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) as one of their policy recommendations.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): In support of above goals enumerated in 2007 and existing statutory transportation system policy goals, the Department of Transportation (DOT) is directed to establish benchmarks for per capita VMT reduction equal to 18 percent by 2020; 30 percent by 2035; and 50 percent by 2050 based on a statewide baseline of 75 billion VMT less the miles attributable to commercial vehicles which are exempt. DOT is also required to establish and convene by July 1, 2008, a collaborative process to develop mechanisms and practices to help state, regional, and local entities make progress toward these VMT reduction benchmarks. This process must also identify relevant, successful VMT reduction strategies currently used in Washington and other jurisdictions as well as potential revenue options for local governments to finance VMT reduction efforts. The study group will also develop tools that can measure annual progress toward the reduction targets at the local, regional, and state levels and can distinguish between common travel purposes. The study group will establish a process for WSDOT to periodically evaluate progress toward the benchmarks, measure achieved and projected emissions reductions, and recommend whether the benchmarks should be adjusted to meet the goals for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and finally, estimate the projected reductions in greenhouse gas emissions if the benchmarks are achieved, taking into account the expected implementation of existing state and federal mandates for vehicle technology and fuels, as well as expected growth in population and vehicle travel.

A report on this process and its recommendations is due from the study group, to the Legislature, by December 1, 2008.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): Baseline Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) is set at 75 billion less VMT attributable to commercial fleet which are exempt from this act. The commercial fleet is also encouraged to continue to pursue clean fuel and fleet options, electrification at idle opportunities, and off-peak delivery schedules.

The study group's responsibilities are more fully defined and the study group, not DOT, is responsible for issuing the report to the Legislature in December 2008.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: Single occupant vehicles (SOVs) are the largest contributor to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Washington State. Reducing per capita vehicles miles traveled (VMTs) by SOVs is the most significant thing the state can do to reduce GHGs. Reduction of VMT will promote alternative transportation options and choices. Reducing VMTs will make the workforce more efficient as non-SOV commuters use commute time to enhance productivity. Reducing VMT also reduces the need to build expensive highway capacity. Reducing VMT has land use implications as well including development of more dense and walkable communities.

OTHER: VMT for commercial traffic is increasing as the state's population and position as a global trade route continues to grow. While agreeing with the goals of the bill, an exemption for commercial vehicles should be considered. Voluntary use of alternative transportation should be encouraged; not mandated. Incentives should instead be provided to vehicle manufacturers and buyers to continue to move the market toward lower emissions vehicles. Other recent actions such as new federal fuel efficiency standards and Washington's adoption of California emissions standards are positive steps towards GHG reduction goals. There are also concerns with targets identified in the legislation and the study element of the bill should instead be used to identify measures and baseline VMT data.

Persons Testifying: PRO: William Kelly, All Aboard Washington; Marshall Taylor, Department of Ecology; John Todd, Greater Greenwood Bike/Pedestrian Safety Coalition; Anirudh Sahni, Transportation Choices Coalition; Marian Wineman, League of Women Voters; Tim Gould, Sierra Club; Genesee Adkins, Transportation Choices Coalition; Jay Arnold, Futurewise; Gordon Black, Bicycle Alliance of Washington.

OTHER: Pat Halstead; Washington Trucking Association, Dave Overstreet; AAA, Katy Taylor; WSDOT.