

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1793

As Reported by House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to alternative student transportation.

Brief Description: Addressing alternative student transportation.

Sponsors: Representatives Williams, Goodman, Nelson, White, Pedersen, Roberts, Upthegrove and Eddy.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/24/09, 2/27/09 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Places the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Safe Routes to Schools Program (Program) in statute and establishes the Program's grant application guidelines.
- Requires the WSDOT to provide information, resources, training, and grant evaluation.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 23 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Liias, Vice Chair; Rodne, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell, Driscoll, Eddy, Ericksen, Finn, Flannigan, Herrera, Johnson, Klippert, Moeller, Morris, Rolfes, Sells, Simpson, Springer, Takko, Upthegrove, Wallace, Williams and Wood.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong and Cox.

Staff: Teresa Berntsen (786-7301)

Background:

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.

The federal Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005 established a Safe Routes to Schools Program (Program). The SAFETEA-LU provided funds to be administered by state departments of transportation to provide financial assistance to state, local, and regional agencies and non-profit organizations for projects that improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

Beginning in 2005, Washington's transportation budget has provided state funds for the Program administered by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). The associated budget provisos require that the WSDOT identify cost-effective projects and submit a prioritized list to the Legislature. The WSDOT provides potential grant applicants information and training and issues an annual call for projects. The WSDOT also contracts with nonprofit organizations to provide information and technical assistance.

The WSDOT evaluates grant applications using a Safe Routes to Schools Advisory Board (Board) comprised of nine members, who use evaluation criteria developed by the agency consistent with guidelines for the Program outlined in SAFETEA-LU. The Board was abolished in February 2009 by Executive Order 09-02, "Rescission of Executive Orders and Elimination of Certain Boards and Commissions."

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Program is established within the WSDOT. The purpose of the Program is to enable and encourage children to walk and bicycle to school; to make bicycling and walking to school safer and more appealing; and to facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

The WSDOT must administer a competitive grant program for the federal and state funds. The WSDOT must provide information, resources, training, and grant evaluation, and must contract with a nonprofit(s) to provide information and technical assistance regarding the Program.

The WSDOT must coordinate with the National Center for Safe Routes to Schools to standardize Program evaluation, measure progress, and learn from other programs across the country.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The following provisions are removed:

- raising the minimum amount the WSDOT must spend for trail and path purposes from 0.3 percent of all of its funds to 1 percent;
- requiring that at least 50 percent of the grants be awarded to disadvantaged schools;
- requiring that at least 25 percent of the amount of the grant be awarded for non-infrastructure grants that emphasize education and enforcement efforts; and

- creation of a statewide advisory committee to refine grant criteria and review applications.
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Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Encouraging safe routes to schools is an important area of transportation policy. There are a wealth of personal and societal benefits that come from walking to school. This bill codifies the best practices of the existing Safe Routes to Schools Program, which is working and should be continued.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Williams, prime sponsor; Jen Cole, Feet First; Liz Crowl, Skagit County Healthy Community Project; Donna Ziegler, Wahluke School District; and Tessa Greigor, Cascade Bicycle Club.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.