

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2439

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, March 2, 1998

Title: An act relating to traffic safety education.

Brief Description: Providing for traffic safety education.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation Policy & Budget (originally sponsored by Representatives D. Sommers, Costa, Benson, Sterk, Gombosky and O'Brien).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/26/98, 3/2/98 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Prince, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Goings, Haugen, Heavey, Horn, Jacobsen, Morton, Oke, Patterson, Prentice, Rasmussen and Sellar.

Staff: Jennifer Hanlon (786-7316)

Background: The Legislature created the Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC) to plan and supervise programs for the prevention of accidents on streets and highways. The commission also coordinates the development of traffic safety programs and works to promote and improve driver education.

The Department of Licensing (DOL) and driver training schools provide information on traffic safety in traffic education courses and instructional materials.

DOL may require a driver to submit to an examination if the department determines that the driver is incompetent or otherwise not qualified to be licensed. Following the examination, the department may suspend or revoke the license of the driver or issue the driver a license subject to restrictions.

Summary of Amended Bill: WTSC establishes a program for administering grants for educational programs on pedestrian safety and the safe operation of bicycles. The commission should cooperate with the Criminal Justice Training Commission, the Bicycle Federation of America, the League of American Bicyclists, and other organizations in developing the program. In selecting grant recipients, the commission looks to the most effective programs for traffic safety.

Funds from the Insurance Commissioner's regulatory account may be used for the bicycle and pedestrian education program.

DOL and driver training schools must provide information on the use of the left-hand lane by motor vehicles. Additionally, they must provide educational information on bicyclists' and pedestrians' rights and responsibilities.

When a driver is responsible for a crash resulting in the death of a person, DOL must require the driver to submit to an examination. The examination must be completed within 120 days after the department receives the accident report.

If a driver is responsible for a crash resulting in a serious injury, an officer may indicate whether the driver is competent. DOL may require the driver to be retested and participate in a driver improvement program.

Bicycle equipment requirements for riding at night are changed.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The dedicated account for bicycle and pedestrian safety education is removed. Funds from the Insurance Commissioner's regulatory account may be used for the safety education program.

A driver responsible for a crash resulting in a fatality must be retested within 120 days after the department receives the accident report. A driver responsible for a crash resulting in a serious injury may be retested by the Department of Licensing.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Cyclists are injured by drivers several times a year. Bicycle organizations are already conducting education programs without funding. The bicycle community supports this legislation.

Testimony Against: A proposed amendment increasing the fee of drivers' abstracts is harmful to the insurance industry. Insurance companies already perform bicycle education programs and they are not the appropriate group to fund this bill.

Testified: PRO: Representative Sommers, prime sponsor; Steve Lind, Traffic Safety Commission; Larry Laveen, Capital Bicycling Club; Michael Temple, Northwest Bike Association; CON (on funding amendment): Mike Kapphahn, Farmers Insurance; Basil Badley, American Insurance Association; Mel Sorensen, National Association of Independent Insurers; Renetta Wilson, State Farm; Rob Tee, Safeco.