

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6284

As Passed Senate, February 16, 2002

Title: An act relating to providing incentives to reduce air pollution through the licensing and use of neighborhood electric vehicles.

Brief Description: Providing incentives to reduce air pollution.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Environment, Energy & Water (originally sponsored by Senators Jacobsen, Horn, Kline, Regala, Rasmussen, Haugen, Carlson, Fraser, Kohl-Welles, Eide, Thibaudeau, Keiser, McAuliffe and Finkbeiner).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Environment, Energy & Water: 1/24/02, 2/7/02 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 2/16/02, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY & WATER

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6284 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Fraser, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Eide, Hale, Jacobsen, Keiser, McDonald and Morton.

Staff: Richard Rodger (786-7461)

Background: Neighborhood electric vehicles (NEVs) are four-wheeled electric vehicles with a top speed of 25 miles per hour. NEVs are used throughout the country as an alternative to gasoline vehicles, particularly for short-trip, neighborhood or commute operation. Thirty-seven other states have approved the limited use of NEVs on streets and roadways. As electric vehicles, NEVs have zero emissions and have the potential to provide significant air quality benefits.

NEVs do not meet the current definition of a motor vehicle and are therefore not allowed to operate on streets and roadways.

Summary of Bill: Neighborhood electric vehicles (NEVs) are defined as "a self-propelled, electrically powered four-wheeled motor vehicle that has a speed attainable in one mile that is greater than 20 miles per hour but does not exceed 25 miles per hour and conforms to federal regulations." NEVs are included in the definition of a motor vehicle.

A NEV may operate on a street or highway having a speed limit of 35 miles per hour or less if: (a) the street or highway is not part of the state highway system; (b) the vehicle is properly licensed and displays a license plate; and (c) the operator has a valid Washington driver's license, carries a motor vehicle liability policy, and obeys statutory restrictions on crossing specified roadways.

Violation of the NEV statute is a traffic infraction.

Local authorities may regulate the operation of NEVs on streets and highways under their jurisdiction by resolution or ordinance, if the regulations are consistent with the provisions motor vehicle code. The local authorities may not regulate NEVs on state highways, upon highways having a speed limit of 25 miles per hour or less, and may not establish requirements regarding registration and licensing of these vehicles.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 21, 2001.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2003.

Testimony For: This legislation allows NEVs to be operated on designated public roadways, as they are currently restricted to use on private roads. NEVs have zero air emissions; lower transportation costs and reduced energy use; slow down neighborhood street traffic to the speed limit; reduce parking pressures and congestion as two to three vehicles can be parked in a conventional parking space; and reduce noise in communities, as the vehicles are nearly silent. Significant increases in NEV use and the resulting air quality benefits will not occur without this legislation.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Linda S. Graham, Puget Sound Clean Cities Coalition; David Kircher, Puget Sound Clean Air Agency; Jim Ramstad, Global Electric Motor Cars; David Carr, National Assn. of Fleet Administration; Donna Ewing, League of Women Voters; Bill LaBorde, Transportation Choices Coalition.