

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6569

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 12, 2002

Title: An act relating to green lanes.

Brief Description: Creating green lanes.

Sponsors: Senators Finkbeiner and Gardner.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/4/02, 2/12/02 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6569 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Gardner, Vice Chair; Benton, Finkbeiner, Jacobsen, Kastama, Keiser, Prentice and Swecker.

Staff: Tami Neilson (786-7452)

Background: High occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes were created to encourage carpools and reduce traffic congestion.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Department of Transportation and local authorities may designate any portion of any highway in their jurisdictions or any HOV lane as a green lane when this designation increases efficiency, aids in the conservation of energy resources, or improves air quality. Traditional users of HOV lanes, such as public transportation vehicles and vehicles carrying the appropriate number of passengers, are allowed in green lanes. In addition, those vehicles with an average gasoline mileage of at least twice the national average and vehicles who are permanently mitigating greenhouse gas emissions by paying a mitigation fee are authorized to use green lanes. These two types of vehicles are issued a green decal which authorizes them to use the green lanes, and are defined as green vehicles, as are traditional users of HOV lanes.

The amount of the mitigation fee is determined by the Department of Licensing (DOL). Half of the fee amount goes to the Washington State University energy program, while the remaining amount is used to purchase mass transit passes for low-income riders.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Green lanes are used by green vehicles when the limitation of such lanes not only increases the efficient use of the highway and aids in the conservation of energy resources, but also when air quality is improved. The definition of a "green vehicle" is not limited to vehicles with an average gasoline mileage of at least twice the national average and to those who permanently mitigate greenhouse gas emissions by

paying a fee. The definition also includes public transportation vehicles and vehicles carrying the specified number of passengers.

The DOL, not the DOT, sets the mitigation fee or a schedule of fees based on the age or emissions of a vehicle. The fee cannot exceed \$3,600 annually and may be paid either annually or monthly. Fee use is clarified. Half of the fee is transferred to the Washington State University energy program, where the money is used for air pollution mitigation in the same counties in which a vehicle paying a mitigation fee is used. The other half of the fee is used to purchase mass transit passes for low-income riders within the boundaries of a transit authority where a vehicle paying the mitigation fee is used.

The DOL, not the DOT, issues the decals and gives appropriate law enforcement agencies the names and license numbers of vehicles who have been issued a decal, but the information is not posted on public internet sites.

RCW 47.52.025 is not amended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 11, 2002.

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

Testimony For: Transportation contributes greatly to global warming. People pay a lot of money to drive in high occupancy toll lanes, and this generates money for the state.

Testimony Against: (Concerns) HOV lanes are full during peak hours. HOV lanes should not be converted to green lanes until all carpool lanes require three passengers.

Testified: Senator Finkbeiner, prime sponsor; Blair Henry, Northwest Council on Climate Change; Linda Hendriksen, DOL; Dave Sjoding, WSU Energy Program; Bill LaBorde, Transportation Choices Coalition.