

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1438

As Reported by House Committee On:
Transportation

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 through the use of neighborhood electric vehicles.

Sponsors: Representatives Sullivan, Jarrett, Upthegrove, Nixon, Schoesler, Crouse, Wood, Gombosky, Ruderman, Cooper, Linville, Rockefeller, Hudgins, McDermott and Wallace.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/20/03, 2/28/03 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Includes neighborhood electric vehicles in definition of a motor vehicle and legalizes their use on local roads having speed limits of 35 miles per hour or less.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 16 members: Representatives Murray, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Simpson, Vice Chair; Ericksen, Ranking Minority Member; Jarrett, Asst Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong; Clibborn; Cooper; Dickerson; Hankins; Hatfield; Hudgins; Kristiansen; Lovick; Romero and Wood.

Staff: Gene Baxstrom (786-7303).

Background:

Neighborhood electric vehicles are four-wheeled electric vehicles that can reach a maximum speed of 25 miles per hour. They are used in many states primarily for traveling within communities. They are not permitted on public highways (public roads)

in Washington. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has developed equipment standards for low-speed vehicles.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Neighborhood electric vehicles are included in the definition of a motor vehicle. The vehicles are defined as four-wheeled motor vehicles that are self-propelled and electrically powered, can reach a speed between 20 and 25 miles per hour and conform to federal regulations.

Neighborhood electric vehicles may be operated on a public highway having a speed limit of 35 miles per hour or less if certain conditions are met. The conditions are that the vehicle is licensed and displays plates, the vehicle is insured for liability, the vehicle may not operate on a state highway, and that the vehicle may not cross a highway with a speed limit over 35 miles per hour, unless certain criteria are met. The vehicle operator must have a valid driver's license.

The operator of a neighborhood electric vehicle is in violation of the above provisions is guilty of a traffic infraction. Seatbelt and child restraint laws are applicable.

Local authorities may regulate the operations of these types of vehicles on public highways under their jurisdiction if the regulations are consistent with the motor vehicle code. The local authorities may not permit vehicles on state highways or require additional registration or licensing.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Local governments are permitted to restrict neighborhood electric vehicle movements on roads which are not part of the state highway system and have speed limits of 25 miles per hour or less (the prohibition on such regulation is removed). Vehicle drivers and occupants are required to comply with lap and shoulder belt requirements and child restraint laws.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect on August 1, 2003.

Testimony For: These vehicles provide mobility within a community with minimal environmental impact. Seventy-five percent of trips are eight miles or less. Their operation creates no air pollution and they are particularly useful for short trips, where

other vehicles are most polluting. They are proven vehicles with dealer support and have to meet federal standards for equipment, including safety provisions. They are inexpensive to operate and provide a useful alternative to more polluting vehicles. They are an ideal vehicle for planned communities.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Sullivan, prime sponsor; Linda Graham, Puget Sound Clean Cities Coalition; Jim Armstrong, Spokane County Conservation District; John Kennelly, Global Electric Motorcars; David Kircher, Puget Sound Clean Air Agency; Roderick Wild, City of Port Townsend; Al Price, Columbia Par Car; Phil Rathjen, Bellingham Chrysler and Daimler Chrysler; Bill Backlund; David Gordon; Donna Ewing; and Alastair Dodwell.