

FINAL BILL REPORT

HB 2065

PARTIAL VETO

C 370 L 03

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Facilitating license plate technology advances.

Sponsors: By Representatives Simpson and Edwards.

House Committee on Transportation
Senate Committee on Highways & Transportation

Background:

The license plate production system used by the Department of Licensing (DOL) has been in place since the 1920s and involves a labor intensive process of manually stamping each plate set, with the labor being provided by the inmates at the Walla Walla State Penitentiary.

On a national level, big strides have been made on the technology end of license plate manufacturing and several states are taking advantage of this. Computer driven manufacturing processes have been developed which allow all license plate information to be inputted and managed via a computer, and printed out almost instantaneously using digital technology. While this technology is attractive and would increase flexibility in manufacturing, the cost of implementing this type of technology in Washington is not known and absent a revenue source, would carry a significant impact on already limited resources.

Summary:

The Department of Licensing (DOL) is required to implement a digital license plate system. The system must be in place and operational by July 1, 2004, and must be used to produce all license plates issued by the DOL by no later than January 1, 2007. All license plates must be obtained from the Department of Corrections.

The use of a non-standard background on vehicle license plates is authorized, allowing for variations in color and design, provided that the plate is legible and clearly identifiable as a Washington plate.

In providing for the replacement of license plates every seven years, the DOL is required to offer to vehicle owners the option of retaining their current license plate number. If an owner chooses to do so, the DOL must charge a retention fee of \$20, with the revenue

to be deposited in the newly created License Plate Technology Account until the financing necessary to implement a digital system has been paid in full, at which time the revenue will be deposited into the Multimodal Transportation Account.

The License Plate Technology Account (Account) is created and expenditures from the Account must support current and future license plate technology and systems integration upgrades for both the DOL and the Department of Corrections. Monies in the Account may be spent only after appropriation and may be used to reimburse the Motor Vehicle Account for any appropriation made to implement the digital license plate system.

An additional 25 cents is added to the current \$3.50 filing fee paid by all vehicle owners at the time of registration. Proceeds from this fee are to be deposited in the Account.

The DOL must offer license plate design services to organizations that are sponsoring a new special license plate series or are seeking to redesign the appearance of an existing special license plate. The DOL must charge \$1,500 for this service, which would include one original license plate design and up to five additional renditions of the original design. If an organization wants more than five renditions, the DOL must charge \$500 per additional rendition. The revenue generated by this service must be deposited in the Account until the financing necessary to implement a digital system has been paid in full, at which time the revenue will be deposited into the Multimodal Transportation Account.

If this act is not referenced by bill or chapter number in the Transportation Appropriations Act by June 30, 2003, this act is null and void.

Votes on Final Passage:

House 52 45
Senate 41 7 (Senate amended)
House 58 40 (House concurred)

Effective: July 27, 2003

Partial Veto Summary: The Governor vetoed the sections that would have: required the DOL to phase in a digital license plate system, starting on July 1, 2004, with full implementation required by January 1, 2007; established an optional \$20 for vehicle owners wishing to retain their current license plate number; established fees which the DOL could have charged in exchange for providing license plate design services to an organization sponsoring a new special license plate series; and made the entire bill null and void if it was not referenced in the Transportation Budget bill by June 30, 2003.