

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5121

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Highways & Transportation, March 5, 2003

**Title:** An act relating to high-occupancy vehicle lanes.

**Brief Description:** Opening high-occupancy vehicle lanes during nonpeak hours.

**Sponsors:** Senators Rossi, Benton, Carlson, Zarelli, T. Sheldon, Deccio, Esser, Hale, Hewitt, Johnson, Schmidt, Honeyford, Morton, Sheahan, Mulliken and Oke.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Highways & Transportation: 2/13/03, 3/5/03 [DPS, DNP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORTATION

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5121 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Horn, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Swecker, Vice Chair; Esser, Finkbeiner, Mulliken and Oke.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Jacobsen, Prentice and Spanel.

**Staff:** Janice Baumgardt (786-7319)

**Background:** The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and local governments are authorized to reserve any portion of a highway under their jurisdiction as a high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane. HOV lanes may be designated for the exclusive use of public transportation vehicles or private vehicles carrying not less than a specified number of persons. HOVs may be restricted at all times, at specified times of day, or on specified days.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** WSDOT's authority to designate HOV lanes is restricted to 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding state holidays on the following facilities: SR 405; I90, east of SR 405; and SR 520, east of SR 405. Exempt are the following: HOV direct access ramps; HOV freeway queue bypasses; and HOV vehicle map meter bypasses. Sunset provisions require review of these restrictions of WSDOT's authority by June 30, 2008.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** Restriction of authority is limited to 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding state holidays. Restriction of authority is limited to: SR 405, I90 east of SR 405, and SR 520 east of SR 405. Exempt from this restriction are: HOV direct access ramps, HOV freeway queue bypasses, and HOV vehicle ramp meter bypasses. Technical changes are made to existing HOV statutes. Sunset provision is added.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** Excess freeway capacity on HOV lanes should be used to decrease congestion.

**Testimony Against:** The cost is great to bring HOV lanes to standards required by FHWA before they can be opened to the public. HOV lanes do not have unlimited capacity on middays and weekends. Opening HOV lanes will increase transit travel times causing transit to operate less efficiently and cost more. Multi-modal transportation should be encouraged more because it will reduce congestion, which in turn will reduce pollution and gas consumption.

**Testified:** PRO: Senator Rossi, prime sponsor; CON: Rick Walsh, King County Metro; Sherry Appleton, League of Women Voters; Charlie Howard, WSDOT; Jim Shipman, Washington State Transit Association.