
Transportation Committee

HB 1775

Brief Description: Concerning the regulation of certain limousine carriers.

Sponsors: Representatives White, Carlyle, Nelson, Upthegrove and Simpson.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Classifies executive sedans and executive vans as for hire vehicles when operating in counties with a population of one million or more or in cities with a population of 500,000 or more.
- Expands the ability of port districts in a county with a population of one million or more to regulate limousine carriers to include regulation of insurance requirements and license fees.
- Grants counties with a population of one million or more and cities with a population of 500,000 or more the authority to regulate executive sedans and executive vans with regards to entry, safety of equipment, chauffer qualifications, insurance requirements, license fees, and operations.
- Allows port districts in a county with a population of one million or more, counties with a population of one million or more, and cities with a population of 500,000 or more to enter into cooperative agreements to regulate executive sedans and executive vans.

Hearing Date: 2/11/09

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315)

Background:

Cities, counties, and port districts may regulate taxicab companies operating within their jurisdictions, and may control entry, rate, route, licensing, and safety. Both King County and the city of Seattle have chosen to regulate taxicabs and have developed guidelines to enforce licensing, rates, routes, driver qualifications, safety, and vehicle inspection provisions.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

In 1996, the regulation of limousines was transferred from the Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) to the Department of Licensing (DOL). The DOL regulates entry, equipment, chauffeur qualifications, and operations. In addition, the Port of Seattle regulates limousines with regard to entry, chauffeur qualifications, operations, and equipment at SeaTac International Airport.

A limousine is a for-hire, chauffeur-driven, unmetered, unmarked luxury motor vehicle that meets one of the following definitions:

- "stretch limousine" is an automobile whose wheelbase has been altered, has a seating capacity of no more than 12 passengers, and is equipped with amenities;
- "executive sedan" is a four-door sedan with a minimum wheelbase of 114.5 inches, a seating capacity of no more than three passengers behind the driver, and standard factory amenities;
- "executive van" is a van, minivan, or minibus with a seating capacity of seven to 14 passengers behind the driver;
- "classic car" is a fine and distinctive automobile that is 30 years old or older;
- "executive sport utility vehicle" means an automobile with a seating capacity of not less than three passengers and not more than six passengers behind the driver, and a minimum wheelbase of 116 inches that has not been altered, which does not fall into one of the other categories; or
- "stretch sport utility vehicle" is an automobile whose wheelbase has been altered, has a seating capacity of no more than 14 passengers, and is equipped with amenities, which does not fall into one of the other categories.

A limousine carrier must have an office; a vehicle cannot solely be used as an office. Arrangements for service are prearranged through the carrier's office and dispatched to the limousine. Customers cannot make arrangements with the driver for immediate rental of a limousine, even if the driver is the owner. A limousine carrier must certify that each chauffeur: (1) is 21 years of age, (2) holds a valid Washington driver's license, (3) has successfully completed a training course and written exam approved by DOL, (4) has passed a background check performed by the Washington State Patrol, and (5) submits a medical certificate upon initial application and every three years thereafter validating the driver's fitness.

Limousine carriers must list their unified business identifier when advertising and specify the type of service offered. A limousine carrier cannot advertise as a taxicab company. Unlawful operation of a limousine without a certificate is a misdemeanor on first offense and a gross misdemeanor thereafter. Violation of the insurance provisions related to limousines and false advertising are gross misdemeanors.

Cities, counties, and port districts may regulate for-hire vehicles within their respective jurisdictions with regard to entry, rates, routes, safety, and licensing. (This is in addition to DOL's current licensing and insurance regulations.)

Summary of Bill:

Executive sedans and executive vans are classified as for-hire vehicles when operating in counties with a population of one million or more or in cities with a population of 500,000 or more.

The ability of port districts in a county with a population of one million or more to regulate limousine carriers is expanded to include regulation of insurance requirements and license fees. Counties with a population of one million or more and cities with a population of 500,000 or more are granted the authority to regulate executive sedans and executive vans with regards to entry, safety of equipment, chauffeur qualifications, insurance requirements, license fees, and operations, which gives these cities and counties regulatory authority equivalent to the port districts in regards to executive sedans and executive vans.

Port districts in a county with a population of one million or more, counties with a population of one million or more, and cities with a population of 500,000 or more are allowed to enter into cooperative agreements to regulate executive sedans and executive vans.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.