
Transportation Committee

HB 1793

Brief Description: Addressing alternative student transportation.

Sponsors: Representatives Williams, Goodman, Nelson, White, Pedersen, Roberts, Upthegrove and Eddy.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Places the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Safe Routes to Schools Program (Program) in statute and establishes the Program's grant application guidelines.
- Requires the WSDOT to fund a center to provide information, resources, training, and grant evaluation, and to contract with a nonprofit(s).
- Raises the minimum amount the WSDOT must spend for trail and path purposes from 0.3 percent of all of its funds to 1 percent.
- Requires that at least 25 percent of state funds spent for trail and path purposes must supplement federal funds contributed to the Program.

Hearing Date: 2/24/09

Staff: Teresa Berntsen (786-7301)

Background:

The federal Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005 established a Safe Routes to Schools Program (Program). The Act provided funds to be administered by state departments of transportation to provide financial assistance to state, local, and regional agencies and non-profit organizations for projects that improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

Beginning in 2005, Washington's transportation budget has provided state funds for the Program administered by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). The associated

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budget provisos require that the WSDOT identify cost-effective projects and submit a prioritized list to the Legislature. The WSDOT provides potential grant applicants information and training and issues an annual call for projects. The WSDOT also contracts with nonprofit organizations to provide information and technical assistance. The WSDOT evaluates grant applications using a Safe Routes to Schools Advisory Board comprised of nine members, who use evaluation criteria developed by the agency consistent with guidelines for the Program outlined in SAFETEA-LU.

Summary of Bill:

The Program is established within the WSDOT. The purpose of the Program is to enable and encourage children to walk and bicycle to school; to make bicycling and walking to school safer and more appealing; and to facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that improve safety; and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

The WSDOT must administer a competitive grant program for the federal and state funds. At least 50 percent of the grants awarded must be to disadvantaged schools as defined by the bill. At least 25 percent of the amount of grant awards must be for non-infrastructure grants that emphasize education and enforcement efforts, which may only be awarded to schools that currently provide adequate safe walking and biking routes.

A statewide advisory committee is created to refine grant criteria and review applications.

The WSDOT must fund a center to provide information, resources, training, and grant evaluation. The WSDOT must contract with a nonprofit(s) to provide information and technical assistance regarding the Program.

The WSDOT must coordinate with the National Center for Safe Routes to Schools to standardize Program evaluation, measure progress, and learn from other programs across the country.

The minimum amount the WSDOT must spend for trail and path purposes is raised from 0.3 percent of all funds to 1 percent. At least 25 percent of state funds spent for trail and path purposes must be supplements for federal funds contributed to the Program. The state funds must be drawn equally from the Multimodal Transportation Account and the Transportation Partnership Account.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 2/20/09.

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