

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6346

As Reported by House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to expanding the use of certain electric vehicles.

Brief Description: Expanding the use of certain electric vehicles.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Ranker, Haugen, Regala, Rockefeller, Pridemore, Marr, King, Fraser, Swecker, Kilmer, Shin, Tom, Kohl-Welles and Kline).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/17/10, 2/24/10 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House)**

- Allows a person to operate a neighborhood electric vehicle (NEV) or medium-speed electric vehicle (MEV) on city and county streets and county roads in San Juan County with a speed limit of 45 miles per hour (mph) or less.
- Changes the minimum speed of a MEV from 30 mph to 25 mph.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 26 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Liias, Vice Chair; Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Rodne, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Campbell, Dickerson, Driscoll, Eddy, Ericksen, Finn, Flannigan, Herrera, Johnson, Klippert, Kristiansen, Moeller, Nealey, Rolfes, Sells, Shea, Springer, Takko, Upthegrove, Williams and Wood.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Simpson.

Staff: Jerry Long (786-7306).

Background:

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.

Under Washington law, it is a traffic infraction for any person to drive or move a motor vehicle on any public road if the vehicle does not meet safety and equipment standards specified by federal code, state statute, or agency rule.

There are two type of neighborhood electric vehicles:

- Neighborhood electric vehicles (NEV) - NEVs are defined as being capable of traveling at least 20 miles per hour (mph), but not more than 25 mph. These vehicles must meet federal safety and equipment standards for low-speed vehicles. Equipment standards for low-speed vehicles include headlights and tail lights, a windshield, mirrors, turn signals, and seat belts.
- Medium-speed electric vehicles (MEV) - MEVs are defined as being capable of traveling at least 30 mph, but not more than 35 mph. These vehicles do not meet the safety and equipment standards of the higher speed vehicles, but must meet the requirements of the lower speed vehicles if they are to be operated on public roads.

Under Washington law, both NEVs and MEVs may be driven on city streets and county roads that are not state routes if the road has a speed limit of 35 mph or less. Both vehicle types must have a vehicle license, and operators must have a driver's license and liability insurance.

Local jurisdictions may prohibit NEVs on roads with a speed limit over 25 mph, and local jurisdictions may prohibit MEVs on roads with a speed limit over 35 mph.

Summary of Amended Bill:

In counties consisting of islands whose only connection to the mainland are ferry routes, a person may operate a NEV and MEV on city streets and county roads that are not state routes if the road has a speed limit of 45 mph or less. Currently, the increased speed limit in this provision will apply to only San Juan County.

A NEV and MEV must not cross a roadway with a speed limit in excess of 45 mph, unless the crossing begins and ends on a roadway with a speed limit of 45 mph or less and occurs at an intersection of approximately 90 degrees.

The definition of MEV is changed to bring its minimum speed attainable down from more than 30 mph to more than 25 mph. The definition change eliminates a gap between the definitions of NEVs and MEVs.

If an electric vehicle is involved in an accident, an accident report must be completed and filed like any other vehicle. The Department of Licensing, when registering electric vehicles, must use a separate vehicle classification for future tracking and reporting purposes.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:

If an electric vehicle is involved in an accident, an accident report must be completed and filed like any other vehicle. The Department of Licensing, when registering electric vehicles, must use a separate vehicle classification for future tracking and reporting purposes.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The bill pertains to the electric vehicles in the San Juan Islands. The bill increases the roads they can travel on from roads with speed limits of 35 mph to roads with speed limits of 45 mph. This allows citizens of the county to use the MEVs on county roads that are not state highways to run errands and go to town. The Sheriff of San Juan Island County is in support of this legislation. These vehicles are much safer than the mopeds that are already being used legally on these county roads.

(With concerns) Medium-speed electric vehicles are only required to meet federal safety standards, as are the NEVs that by federal law cannot travel over 25 mph. Public safety is top priority and the concern is that the vehicles, which are only capable of 35 mph, will not protect the occupants in an accident with a full-size vehicle, which will be going at least 45 mph. Since these vehicles will not keep up with the flow of traffic, there could be passing and road rage issues.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Ranker, prime sponsor.

(With concerns) Jason Berry, Washington State Patrol.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.