

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6207

As of January 13, 2010

Title: An act relating to allowing local governments to create golf cart zones.

Brief Description: Allowing local governments to create golf cart zones.

Sponsors: Senator Haugen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/12/10.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Wendy Malkin (786-7434)

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

Two types of vehicles, neighborhood electric vehicles (NEVs) and medium-speed electric vehicles (MEVs), may be operated, within certain conditions, on public roads even though these vehicles do not meet the safety and equipment standards required of higher speed vehicles. However, these vehicles must meet federal safety and equipment standards for low-speed vehicles. Under federal rule, a low-speed vehicle is defined as being capable of traveling at least 20 miles per hour (mph) but not more than 25 mph.

Under Washington law, NEVs are defined as capable of traveling at least 20 mph but not more than 25 mph. MEVs are defined as being capable of traveling at least 30 mph but not more than 35 mph.

Most golf carts, as originally manufactured, have a top speed of less than 20 mph.

Summary of Bill: Cities or counties may create golf cart zones by ordinance or resolution. The ordinance or resolution must be for the purposes of permitting incidental use of golf carts on public roads that have speed limits of 25 mph or less. In addition, the golf cart zone must surround a golf course. If the golf course within the zone has a minimum age requirement for cart rental or operation, the same age restriction must be required for operation of carts within the zone.

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.

Golf cart drivers within golf cart zones are subject to the same rules of the road as vehicle drivers. Other than rules of the road, golf carts and golf cart drivers within golf cart zones are not subject to motor vehicle provisions, including provisions on non-highway and off-road vehicles, vehicle licensing, driver licensing, safety and equipment standards, seat belt use, and child restraint system use.

Golf carts are defined as gas-powered or electric-powered four-wheeled vehicles, designed for use on a golf course, that cannot attain a speed higher than 20 mph.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Golf courses are happy to work with local communities in any way they can.

OTHER: Recommend that local jurisdictions be given the option to restrict the operation of golf carts to daylight hours. Generally, golf carts do not have adequate lighting. It would certainly be safer to have safety and equipment standards, but this probably is not realistic. It would be good to require safety belts. There should be some requirement for golf cart drivers to be licensed or at least have some instruction and familiarity with rules of the road. Individuals with a suspended license should not be able to operate golf carts on public roads.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Heather Hansen, Washington Golf Industry.

OTHER: Steve Lind, Washington Traffic Safety Commission; Jason Berry, Washington State Patrol.