

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2355

As Passed House:
February 9, 2012

Title: An act relating to the use of alternative traction devices on tires under certain conditions.

Brief Description: Concerning the use of alternative traction devices on tires under certain conditions.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Armstrong, Clibborn, Johnson and Rivers).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/17/12, 2/1/12 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/9/12, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Adds "alternative traction devices" to allowable traction devices in addition to chains and studded tires to be used on a vehicle because of snow, ice, or other conditions tending to cause a vehicle to skid to be approved by the Washington State Patrol.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 29 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Billig, Vice Chair; Liias, Vice Chair; Armstrong, Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Angel, Asay, Eddy, Finn, Fitzgibbon, Hansen, Jinkins, Johnson, Klippert, Kristiansen, Ladenburg, McCune, Moeller, Morris, Moscoso, Overstreet, Reykdal, Rivers, Rodne, Ryu, Shea, Takko, Upthegrove and Zeiger.

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.

A tire on a vehicle on a highway may not have on its outside surface any block, flange, cleat, or spike or any other protuberance of any material other than rubber which projects beyond the tread of the tire. Exemptions are when for safety, because of snow, ice, or other conditions tending to cause a vehicle to skid, the use of tire chains or studded tires is permitted between November 1 and April 1. The Department of Transportation may, from time to time, allow the use of studded tires outside this time period due to weather conditions.

Current statutes authorize the Washington State Patrol (WSP) to adopt rules pertaining to chains and tire studs. Testing of chains or studded tires by the WSP is certified under one of the following:

- conformance to the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards; if none, then
- conformance to current standards and specifications of the Society of Automotive Engineers.

In order for the alternative traction device to be approved, the device must be tested in accordance with a recognized standard. The alternative device must meet or exceed the standard.

The following information must be provided to the WSP:

- certification of the test results by the tester;
- a copy of the testing standards used; and
- documentation of the testing results.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The substitute bill adds "alternative traction devices" to the list of permissible traction devices that conform to rules adopted by the WSP to be used upon any vehicle when required for safety because of snow, ice, or other conditions tending to cause a vehicle to skid in addition to chains and studded tires.

The substitute bill changes the word "protuberance" to "device" when listing the items that are prohibited from projecting beyond the tread of a tire.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Existing statutes limit the traction devices in Washington to chains and studded tires. The bill will give the WSP the authority to develop testing standards for other traction devices for the public to use. There are new products that are easier, faster, and safer to put on a vehicle than tire chains. Several automobile companies in other countries have endorsed other traction devices to be part of their winter package sold with new cars.

A lot of cars, due to their suspension, ABS braking systems, and clearance, cannot use tire chains. The state is looking to the manufacturer to self-certify their product and then the WSP, through rule, will develop the testing standards in which to evaluate the new products. In Colorado, the state already allows alternative traction devices and, in most states, the traction devices are not regulated.

(With concerns) The problem with the existing statute is that traction devices cannot be made of rubber. The WSP currently does not have the authority in statute to consider alternative traction devices. The WSP currently uses a ladder chain standard in which to evaluate different tire chain alternatives. The company proposing an alternative needs to have the tests certified and the results evaluated by the WSP. One of the differences in the United States is that people use tire chains on street tires, where in other countries the government requires winter tires to be used with the alternative traction devices. The testing conditions need to be the same conditions anticipated as a driver would encounter in the winter time in the State of Washington. Commercial trucks are different than passenger vehicles and testing would need to be approved for both types of vehicles.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Mike Groesch and Chuck McGee, McGee Company.

(With concerns) Jason Berry, Washington State Patrol.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.