

SENATE BILL REPORT

E2SSB 5188

As Passed Senate, February 8, 2012

Title: An act relating to harmonizing certain traffic control signal provisions relative to yellow change intervals, certain fine amount limitations, and certain signage and reporting requirements.

Brief Description: Harmonizing certain traffic control signal provisions relative to yellow change intervals, certain fine amount limitations, and certain signage and reporting requirements.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Becker, Haugen, Swecker, Stevens, King, Fain, Delvin, Holmquist Newbry, Honeyford and Hewitt).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/25/11, 2/17/11 [DPS]; 1/10/12, 1/23/12 [DP2S].
Passed Senate: 2/08/12, 45-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5188 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Fain, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Delvin, Ericksen, Frockt, Hill, Litzow, Prentice, Ranker, Rolfes, Sheldon, Shin and Swecker.

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

Background: Under current law, local governments may use automated traffic safety cameras to detect stoplight, railroad crossing, or school speed zone violations. Use of the cameras is restricted to two-arterial intersections, railroad crossings, and school speed zones. The cameras may only take pictures of the vehicle and vehicle license plate while an infraction is occurring, and must not reveal the face of the driver or passengers. Infractions detected through the use of cameras are not part of the registered owner's driving record. Additionally, infractions must be processed like parking infractions, and fines issued for infractions may not exceed the amount of fines issued for other local parking infractions.

Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill: All traffic control signals (stoplights) must have yellow light change intervals that are at least as long as the minimum intervals identified in the federal Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

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.

If an automated traffic safety camera is used to detect stoplight violations, it must be installed on a stoplight that has a yellow change interval duration that meets the standards identified in MUTCD, and the yellow change interval duration may not be reduced after placement of the camera.

The fine issued for a stoplight violation that is detected through the use of an automated traffic safety camera may not exceed the monetary penalty for a violation of the requirement to follow official traffic control devices – currently \$124.

The following provisions are added to the automated traffic safety camera law:

- requires the applicable jurisdiction to conduct an analysis of the proposed camera locations;
- requires annual reports regarding traffic accident rates where a camera is located and the number of infractions issued for each camera;
- requires signage regarding the location of a camera to be posted at least 30 days before activation of the camera; and
- standardizes the signage requirements for camera locations.

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: This bill is about safety and making sure the traffic camera law is transparent, accountable, and consistent throughout the state, but not drafted so restrictively as to make the use of cameras impracticable. This bill provides appropriate sidebars on the use of the technology. Traffic cameras prevent severe crashes. The research on traffic cameras shows a reduction in fatalities and injuries from T-Bone crashes, but an increase in more minor rear-end crashes. Lakewood and Tacoma support this legislation. The bill also includes reporting provisions to confirm whether the cameras are working well or not, signage provisions to provide adequate notice to the public, and a fine limitation to make it consistent with tickets issued directly by a law enforcement officer.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Becker, prime sponsor; Don Pierce, WA Assoc. of Sheriffs & Police Chiefs; Ashley Probart, Assn. of WA Cities; Briahna Taylor, Cities of Lakewood & Tacoma; Steve Lind, WA Traffic Safety Commission; Dave Overstreet, AAA Washington.