

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5252

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Transportation, January 27, 2011

Title: An act relating to streamlining the process applicable to reducing speed limits on state highways.

Brief Description: Streamlining the process applicable to reducing speed limits on state highways.

Sponsors: Senator Haugen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/24/11, 1/27/11 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5252 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; White, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Minority Member; Fain, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Delvin, Hill, Hobbs, Litzow, Nelson, Prentice, Ranker, Shin and Swecker.

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

Background: Under current law, the Secretary of Transportation may reduce maximum speed limits on state highways upon the basis of an engineering and traffic investigation regarding the applicable stretch of highway. However, no timeline is specified in law regarding the completion of the investigation. An investigation may last a few weeks to a few months depending on weather conditions, staff availability, and coordination with the Washington State Patrol.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): An engineering and traffic investigation regarding whether to reduce the maximum speed limit on a state highway must be completed within 60 days. The investigation must accord paramount weight to both public safety and input from applicable local jurisdictions.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): Requires an engineering and traffic investigation to be

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completed within 60 days, rather than 30 days. Requires the investigation to accord paramount weight to both public safety and input from applicable local jurisdictions.

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 on Original Bill: PRO: The Department of Transportation supports this bill generally, but would request a modification to allow for an additional 60-day period to conduct engineering and traffic investigations if good cause exists. Many components exist to an engineering and traffic investigation, including capturing existing speeds occurring at specific times, a comparison of speeds with comparable highways, a field review of roadway and roadside development, and a review of collisions at the location. All of these activities take time to complete. In some cases the review of existing speeds may have to wait a month or more because of seasonal traffic patterns, new roadway operating characteristics or weather constraints. Traffic operation reviews at collision locations or other traffic safety related concerns may compete with speed limit requests for top priority work.

Persons Testifying: PRO: John Nisbet, WSDOT.