

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5301

As of February 11, 2011

Title: An act relating to promoting traffic safety at certain intersections and on certain streets through the regulation of yellow change intervals, right turn movements, and signage and the provision of jurisdictional analysis, accident reporting, and infraction warnings.

Brief Description: Promoting traffic safety at certain intersections and on certain streets through the regulation of yellow change intervals, right turn movements, and signage and the provision of jurisdictional analysis, accident reporting, and infraction warnings.

Sponsors: Senators Regala and Carrell.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/25/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

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 the cameras are not part of the registered owner's driving record. Additionally, the infractions must be processed like parking infractions, and the fine issued for the infraction may not exceed the amount of a fine issued for other local parking infractions.

Summary of 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.

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;
- expands the use of the cameras to detect speed limit violations on arterial streets adjacent to major transit stations, public parks, or recreation facilities;

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- requires annual reports regarding traffic accident rates where a camera is located and the number of infractions issued for each camera;
- restricts the locations where cameras may be placed to intersections of two or more arterials;
- restricts the use of cameras when issuing infractions regarding right turn movements that violate crosswalk requirements;
- limits the use of cameras in school speed zones to set hours when people are arriving or leaving the school;
- requires a 30-day period, after a camera is newly installed or relocated, during which only warnings may be issued; 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: The bill was put forward by the local community. It attempts to bring accountability and transparency to traffic camera programs. The expansion of traffic cameras should only be to improve traffic conditions and public safety. The use of traffic cameras results in a reduction in severe collisions, although it can result in an increase in minor collisions, like fender benders. Generating revenue is a secondary goal with traffic cameras; public safety and changing driver behavior is the ultimate goal. Traffic cameras are a successful form of non-traditional policing.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Regala, prime sponsor; Steve Lind, WA Traffic Safety Commission; Dave Overstreet, AAA of WA; Dick Reed, Dean Shirey, Seattle PD; Bob Karnofski, Auburn PD; Mike Zaro, Lakewood PD; Corey Darlington, Tacoma PD.