

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6138

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 1, 2012

Title: An act relating to maximum vehicle lengths.

Brief Description: Increasing the allowable maximum length for vehicles operated on public highways.

Sponsors: Senator Ericksen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/31/12, 2/01/12 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6138 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Eide, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Minority Member; Fain, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Delvin, Ericksen, Frockt, Hobbs, Litzow, Prentice, Rolfes, Sheldon, Shin and Swecker.

Staff: Kim Johnson (786-7472)

Background: The Federal Highway Administration has defined a truck or straight truck as a non-articulating cargo carrying commercial motor vehicle. Straight trucks are subject to federal weight and width requirements, but not to federal length requirements. The regulations on the length of these commercial trucks remains with the states.

Presently a person cannot legally operate any vehicle, including straight trucks, in the state of Washington having an overall length in excess of 40 feet. This restriction does not apply to: (1) a municipal transit vehicle; (2) auto stage, private carrier bus, school bus, or motor home with an overall length not to exceed 46 feet; or (3) an articulating auto stage with an overall length not to exceed 61 feet. Oregon has set a maximum length for straight trucks of 40 feet and Idaho has a maximum length of 45 feet.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): The maximum length of a straight truck that a person can operate in the state of Washington is increased from 40 feet to 46 feet.

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.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): A technical correction was made concerning the exception for certain vehicles whose maximum length is 46 feet.

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: We asked DOT and WSP if they had any safety concerns with increasing the length of this kind of vehicle, and they had none. A person can operate a motor home that is 46 feet long with just a driver license, and the type of vehicle we are talking about requires a commercial driver license. We have heard no concerns from anyone. We did check truck lengths in other states, most states have 45 foot limit, so this is consistent with what a number of other states have done. The primary truck we use to pick up vehicles for our business was recently pulled over by WSP and issued a citation for violating the maximum length. This truck is the same kind of truck used all over the USA to carry vehicles, and it is safe. We have used this truck since 2003, have licensed it the entire time, and have had it inspected at weigh stations and have never been told it was in violation of state law. If we can't use this truck, we would have to instead use two smaller trucks, which just increases congestions and costs to our company.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Ericksen, prime sponsor; Gary Smith, Independent Business Assn.; Bob Volkman, Gundies Auto Recycling.