

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6304

As of February 1, 2012

Title: An act relating to incorporating motorcycles into certain transportation planning.

Brief Description: Incorporating motorcycles into certain transportation planning.

Sponsors: Senators Rolfes, Delvin, Benton, Hargrove and Hatfield.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/01/12.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Hayley Gamble (786-7452)

Background: Commuter Trip Reduction. The state's first Commuter Trip Reduction (CTR) laws were passed in 1991 and incorporated into the Washington Clean Air Act. CTR programs aim to reduce air pollution, traffic congestion, and consumption of transportation fuels through employer-based programs that reduce the number of commute trips made in single-occupant vehicles. Employers develop and manage their own programs based on locally adopted goals for reducing vehicle trips and miles traveled. More than 1000 worksites and 530,000 commuters statewide participate in the CTR program.

A major employer's CTR program must contain certain elements, including specific measures designed to achieve the local jurisdictions CTR goals. Current law specifies 15 measures that a major employer may choose to include in their CTR program, such as providing vanpools, permitting flexible work hours, and providing reduced parking charges and preferential parking for high occupancy vehicles. A major employer is defined as a private or public employer with 100 or more employees at a single worksite who begins work between 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.

Reserved or Preferential Highway Lanes. Current law provides the Department of Transportation (WSDOT) with general authority to restrict classes of vehicles from using the highways and to reserve certain lanes on the highway system for certain classes of vehicles. Specific authority is provided to restrict lanes or ramps for exclusive or preferential use by public buses, high-occupancy vehicles (HOV) and certain other private buses and vehicles with specific occupancy capacities. Motorcycles are not specifically addressed in current statutes, but are included in WAC 468.510.010 as vehicles authorized to use HOV lanes.

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.

Federal law requires states to allow motorcycles free access to HOV lanes unless doing so would create a safety hazard.

High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes. WSDOT currently operates a pilot HOT lanes project on State Route 167, which gives solo drivers the option to pay to use the HOV lanes. The Transportation Commission is responsible for setting the toll and providing for any exemptions. Motorcycles are currently exempt from the HOT lane toll as they are eligible users of the HOV lane. WSDOT plans to operate HOT lanes on Interstate 405 in the future.

Summary of Bill: Providing reduced parking charges and preferential parking for motorcycles is added to the list of measures a major employer may choose to include in their CTR program.

Motorcycles are added to the list of vehicles WSDOT is authorized to reserve certain highway lanes or ramps for.

Motorcycles are exempt from paying a toll on the State Route 167 HOT lanes pilot project and Interstate 405.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 27, 2012.

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 will update state CTR guidelines to include motorcycles. There is nothing in state law addressing motorcycles and their ability to use HOV lanes – only in federal law, which could be changed. HOV lanes are the safest place for motorcycles to be.

OTHER: AAA has no concerns with adding motorcycles to CTR statutes or the HOV use statutes. However, we do have concerns about allowing motorcycles to use HOT lanes for free. HOT lanes and tolls are used to fund the transportation systems, and motorcycles should be contributing to these fees.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Larry Walker, WA Road Riders Assn.

OTHER: Dave Overstreet, AAA Washington.