

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1007

As Reported by House Committee On: Transportation

Title: An act relating to limiting the use of automated traffic safety cameras to detect speed violations not in school zones to certain cities authorized by the Washington state legislature as a pilot project for at least one full year prior to January 1, 2015.

Brief Description: Limiting the use of automated traffic safety cameras to detect speed violations not in school zones to certain cities.

Sponsors: Representatives Fey, Kochmar, Clibborn, Muri, Bergquist, Klippert, Gregerson, Jinkins and Farrell.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/14/15, 1/26/15 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows cities west of the Cascade Mountains with a population greater than 195,000 people to operate an automated traffic safety camera to detect speed violations under certain circumstances.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Farrell, Vice Chair; Fey, Vice Chair; Moscoso, Vice Chair; Bergquist, Gregerson, Kochmar, McBride, Moeller, Morris, Ortiz-Self, Riccelli, Sells, Takko and Tarleton.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Orcutt, Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Harmsworth, Hayes, Pike, Rodne, Shea, Wilson and Young.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Zeiger.

Staff: Andrew Russell (786-7143).

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.

Background:

An "automated traffic safety camera" is defined in statute as a device that uses a sensor in conjunction with a camera to record a driver's failure to follow certain traffic laws. Currently, automated traffic safety cameras may be used to detect red light violations, railroad crossing violations, and speeding violations in school zones. Additionally, the 2013-15 Biennial Transportation Budget authorized the use of automated traffic safety cameras to detect speed violations in areas outside school zones.

Generally, before an automated traffic safety camera may be installed, the local jurisdiction must adopt an ordinance allowing for the use of such a camera. In addition, the location where a camera will be installed must be marked at least 30 days prior to the camera's activation, and the camera may only take a picture of the vehicle and only while the violation is occurring. Finally, the pictures produced from an automated traffic safety camera are not open to the public and may not be used in a court proceeding except a proceeding relating to a traffic infraction recorded by the camera.

As authorized in the 2013-15 Transportation Budget, automated traffic safety cameras may be used to detect speed violations in areas other than school zones under certain conditions. First, only cities west of the Cascade Mountains with a population of greater than 195,000 people may operate such a camera. Additionally, cities that meet this threshold may operate only one such camera. Currently, there are only two cities west of the Cascade Mountains that the Office of Financial Management estimates to have a population of greater than 195,000 people, Seattle and Tacoma. Finally, the Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC) oversees the use of these cameras as part of a pilot project.

Summary of Bill:

Cities west of the Cascade Mountains with a population of greater than 195,000 people may operate an automated traffic safety camera to detect speed violations outside of school zones only if the Washington Legislature approved the use and location of such a camera as part of a pilot project before January 1, 2014. As a result, ongoing biennial authorization of a pilot project, overseen by the WTSC, would no longer be required to operate an automated traffic safety camera to detect speed violations in these cities. Additionally, only one automated traffic safety camera may be operated in any such city.

Appropriation: None.**Fiscal Note:** Available.**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Since 2009 Tacoma has operated a speed camera on East Bay Drive. The goal of this camera was to reduce injuries and fatalities on this stretch of road. The results have been clear, the injuries and fatalities have been substantially reduced. This is the only feasible means of patrolling this area; there is no room for a police car to monitor the area. This S-curve is a very dangerous area. Since 2005 the accidents in total have decreased significantly. These cameras work to reduce fatalities without increasing risk to police officers. People think of these cameras as revenue generating, but the revenue from this camera goes back into the transportation fund.

If this bill does not pass, the city will lose a valuable safety tool. In this location, the road zig-zags between a railroad and a tribal burial ground, making it difficult to use traditional traffic enforcement methods. There is a lot of signage as drivers approach the camera. The speed limit is 35 miles per hour in this area, but the camera does not issue an infraction unless the driver is going significantly faster than that.

This camera is an important part of the city's safety plan, and this corner can be just as dangerous for an officer to patrol as a driver. Since the installation of the camera, there has been a significant reduction in accidents in the area. The camera is definitely having a traffic-calming effect on drivers.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Fey, prime sponsor; Representative Kochmar; Marty Campbell, City of Tacoma; and Shawn Stringer, Tacoma Police Department.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.