
Transportation Committee

HB 2569

Brief Description: Authorizing the use of high occupancy vehicle lanes by law enforcement and fire department vehicles.

Sponsors: Representatives Sells, Hayes, Van De Wege, Ormsby, Hickel and Senn.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Prohibits officially marked law enforcement or fire department vehicles operated by on-duty personnel and unmarked law enforcement vehicles operated by on-duty personnel in the course of an active investigation from being restricted from using a designated high-occupancy vehicle lane.

Hearing Date: 1/25/16

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and local authorities are authorized to designate any portion of a highway under their respective jurisdictions for the exclusive or preferential use of: (1) public transportation vehicles, (2) motorcycles, (3) private motor vehicles carrying a specified minimum number of passengers, and (4) certain categories of private transportation provider vehicles if the vehicles has a carrying capacity of at least eight passengers. The portion of highways with these restricted usage rules are known as high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes.

The WSDOT and local authorities have the ability to specify certain times of days or certain specified days during which the HOV restrictions are in effect. The WSDOT and local authorities are also authorized to prohibit the use of a HOV lane by private transportation provider vehicles when the average transit speed in the HOV lane fails to meet Federal Department of Transportation standards (falling below 45 miles per hour at least 90 percent of the time during peak hours).

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.

Under current state administrative rule, the following motor vehicles are authorized to use the HOV lanes on interstate highways, state highways, and ramps: (1) municipal transit vehicles; (2) buses with a carrying capacity of 16 or more people; (3) motorcycles; (4) all vehicles meeting specified HOV-lane occupancy requirements (except for trucks with more than a 10,000 pounds maximum operating weight rating); and (5) officially marked law enforcement and fire department vehicles equipped with emergency lights and sirens that are operated by on-duty state patrol or local law enforcement or local or special district fire department personnel.

Summary of Bill:

Officially marked law enforcement or fire department vehicles equipped with emergency lights and sirens and operated by on-duty personnel and unmarked law enforcement vehicles operated by on-duty personnel in the course of an active investigation cannot be restricted from using a designated HOV lane.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 18, 2016.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.