

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6643

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As of February 8, 2016

**Title:** An act relating to a toll exemption for school buses.

**Brief Description:** Requiring a toll exemption for school buses.

**Sponsors:** Senators Bailey and Warnick.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Transportation: 2/08/16.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Staff:** Kim Johnson (786-7472)

**Background:** The Legislature has authorized the collection of tolls on the following facilities:

- the Tacoma Narrows Bridge;
- the SR 520 floating bridge;
- SR 167 high-occupancy toll ("HOT") lanes;
- I-405 express toll lanes; and
- the SR 99 deep bore tunnel.

The Legislature expressly exempted transit buses and vanpool vehicles from tolls for both the I-405 express toll lanes and the 167 HOT lanes.

The Washington State Transportation Commission is the state tolling authority with responsibility of setting toll rates and exemptions. The Commission has adopted a number of toll exemptions, but not all exemptions apply consistently across all facilities. Some of the toll exemptions include Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) maintenance vehicles and emergency vehicles on a bonafide emergency.

Any bus with a carrying capacity of 16 or more passengers is considered a high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) and is exempt from tolls on the I-405 express toll lanes and the SR 167 HOT lanes. Additionally, WSDOT interprets school buses to qualify as toll free vehicles on the 520 floating bridge. The Transportation Commission has adopted a rule requiring that non-carpool vehicles claiming an exemption for the SR 520 floating bridge and the I-405 express toll lanes must have a "Good to Go!" toll account in good standing; have a pass

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(transponder); equip the vehicle with signage; or submit a certification that the vehicle meets the exemption requirements. WSDOT has further developed a process for school buses to obtain a toll exemption, depending on whether the bus is on a regularly scheduled route on the I-405 express toll lanes, the SR 520 floating bridge, or the SR 167 HOT lanes.

**Summary of Bill:** The Transportation Commission is required to provide an exemption from all tolled facilities for school buses, regardless of whether the school bus is traveling on a regularly scheduled route.

WSDOT must develop a process for school buses to use tolled facilities without requiring the use of transponders and a "Good to Go!" account. Any future request for proposals for a new tolling system must include the capability of allowing school buses to use tolled facilities without requiring the use of transponders and a "Good to Go!" account.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 5, 2016.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.