
Transportation Committee

SSB 5402

Brief Description: Creating the Cooper Jones bicyclist safety advisory council.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Liias, Walsh, Billig, Hobbs, King and Sheldon).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Subject to the availability of funds appropriated for this purpose, establishes the Cooper Jones Bicyclist Safety Advisory Council (Bicyclist Council), to be convened by the Washington Traffic Safety Commission to review and analyze data related to bicycle fatalities and serious injuries to identify opportunities for safety improvements, and mandates that the Bicyclist Council meet at least quarterly.
- Mandates annual reporting by the Bicyclist Council that details any findings and recommendations to the Governor and the transportation committees of the Legislature.
- Requires a report be prepared for the transportation committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2018, that includes the strategies deployed to improve bicyclist safety and a recommendation on whether the Bicyclist Council should be continued.
- Expires laws governing the Bicyclist Council on June 30, 2019.

Hearing Date: 3/13/17

Staff: Jennifer Harris (786-7143).

Background:

The Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC) was established in 1967, following passage of the Federal Highway Safety Act of 1966, to oversee efforts to improve safety on Washington's public highways. The WTSC is the federally recognized highway safety office of Washington. In directing its work, the WTSC uses Target Zero—Washington State's Strategic Highway Safety Plan. The WTSC also collects fatal and serious injury crash data, engages in research studies,

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and oversees highway safety pilot projects. In 1998 the "Cooper Jones Act" directed the WTSC to establish a program for improving bicycle and pedestrian safety and to cooperate with stakeholders and independent representatives to form an advisory committee to develop programs and create public-private partnerships to promote bicycle and pedestrian safety.

A 2015 law directed the WTSC to convene a Pedestrian Safety Advisory Council (Pedestrian Council) to review and analyze data related to pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries to identify points at which the transportation system could be improved and to identify patterns in pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries. The Pedestrian Council is required to meet at least quarterly and to provide a report and make recommendations on measures that could improve pedestrian safety by December 31 of each year. By December 1, 2018, the Pedestrian Council is required to report to the Legislature on the strategies that have been deployed to improve pedestrian safety by the Pedestrian Council and to make recommendations on whether the Pedestrian Council should be continued and how it could be improved. Laws governing the Pedestrian Council expire June 30, 2019.

Summary of Bill:

Subject to the availability of funds appropriated for this purpose, the WTSC must convene the Cooper Jones Bicyclist Safety Advisory Council (Bicyclist Council) to review and analyze data related to bicycle fatalities and serious injuries to identify opportunities for safety improvements in the transportation system. The Bicyclist Council may include, but is not limited to the following membership: (1) a representative from the WTSC; (2) an emergency medical technician from the county in which the most bicyclist deaths have occurred; (3) a representative from the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; (4) multiple members of law enforcement who have investigated bicyclist fatalities; (5) a traffic engineer; (6) a representative from the Washington State Department of Transportation; (7) a representative of cities; (8) up to two stakeholders, chosen by the Bicyclist Council, who represent municipalities in which at least one bicyclist fatality has occurred in the previous three years; (9) a representative from a bicyclist advocacy group; (10) a transportation planner with a focus on multimodal planning; (11) a public health official, researcher, or epidemiologist; (12) a member of an academic transportation research organization, such as the Transportation Research Board; and (13) an attorney who has worked in areas of the law related to bicycles. The WTSC may invite other representatives of stakeholder groups to participate in the Bicyclist Council as it deems appropriate.

The Bicyclist Council is required to meet at least quarterly. By December 31 of each year, the Bicyclist Council must issue an annual report that details any findings and recommendations to the Governor and the transportation committees of the Legislature. The WTSC is required to provide the annual report electronically to all municipal governments and state agencies that participated in the Bicyclist Council during that calendar year. The Bicyclist Council is also required to report any budgetary or fiscal recommendations to the Office of Financial Management to the Legislature by August 1, 2018. The Bicyclist Council may make recommendations related to changes to statutes, ordinances, rules, and policies that could improve bicyclist safety, and on how to improve the quality of data collected related to traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

In reviewing bicyclist fatalities and serious injuries in the state, the Bicyclist Council is permitted to review any available information, including accident information maintained in existing databases; statutes, rules, policies, and ordinances governing bicyclists and traffic related to these incidents; and any other relevant information. The Bicyclist Council may review law enforcement incident documentation, supplemental reports, probable cause statements, 911 dispatcher reports, and any other relevant and necessary information only to the extent otherwise permitted by law or court rule.

Documents prepared by and for the Bicyclist Council are inadmissible and may not be used in civil or administrative proceedings unless they exist independently of this use. Neither the WTSC nor the Bicyclist Council may publicly disclose any confidential information obtained by the Bicyclist Council, such as personally identifiable information or medical records. Those who attend Bicyclist Council meetings or who participate in the development, retention, collection, or maintenance of information or documents may not be permitted to testify in any civil action regarding the content of the meetings or of the documents or information prepared. Recommendations by the Bicyclist Council and the WTSC may be disclosed if they do not include personal identifiers.

When acting in good faith, without malice, and within the scope and authority granted under law, staff of the WTSC and members of the Bicyclist Council are immune from civil liability for an activity related to reviews of particular fatalities and serious injuries. No new private civil cause of action is created. The Bicyclist Council is permitted to receive gifts, grants, and endowments from public and private sources for the use and benefit of the purposes of the Bicyclist Council and to spend gifts, grants, and endowments according to their terms subject to state law that governs state official solicitation and acceptance of contributions. The Bicyclist Council may provide grants targeted at improving bicycle safety in accordance with recommendations made by the Bicyclist Council.

The Bicyclist Council is required to report to the transportation committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2018, on the following: the strategies it deploys to improve bicyclist safety; a recommendation regarding whether the Bicyclist Council should be continued; and a recommendation on whether there are any improvements the Legislature can make to improve the Bicyclist Council. Laws governing the Bicyclist Council expire June 30, 2019.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 3, 2017.

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