

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6565

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 6, 2018

Title: An act relating to authorizing wheelchair accessible taxicabs access to high occupancy vehicle lanes.

Brief Description: Authorizing wheelchair accessible taxicabs access to high occupancy vehicle lanes.

Sponsors: Senators Hasegawa and Chase.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/05/18, 2/06/18 [DPS].

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Allows the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to grant access to high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes by wheelchair-accessible taxis.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6565 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hobbs, Chair; Saldaña, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Member; Chase, Cleveland, Dhingra, Fortunato, McCoy, O'Ban, Sheldon, Takko, Wellman and Zeiger.

Staff: Erica Bramlet (786-7321)

Background: Current law allows WSDOT and local authorities to reserve portions of their highways as HOV lanes. They are currently authorized to give access to HOV lanes to the following users:

- public transportation vehicles;
- motorcycles;
- private motor vehicles carrying a minimum of a specified number of passengers; and
- certain private transportation provider vehicles with the capacity to carry eight or more passengers.

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.

Wheelchair-accessible taxis (WATs) are for-hire vehicles designed or modified for the transportation of a person who has a mobility disability and uses a wheelchair or other assistive device. WATs are currently allowed to use HOV lanes only if they are carrying the specified number of passengers. None of the 65 WATs currently operating in Washington state can legally carry 8 or more passengers.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (First Substitute): WSDOT and local authorities may allow WATs to use the HOV lanes on their highways.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on First Substitute: PRO: An identical bill—SSB 5018—sailed through the Senate last year, but DOT is delaying by saying that 65 vehicles will cause an impact to 250 miles of HOV lanes. People with mobility disabilities face many challenges, especially related to transportation. Getting around takes a lot of planning and there is not good cross-county connectivity with public transit options. This bill would help WATs reach their customers faster and help provide them that access to better get around for jobs, school, etc. Being able to access the HOV lanes while picking up clients would remove a burden and help equalize the value of their time with others' time.

The amount of WATs in King County equates to one tenth of one percent of the vehicles currently using the express toll lanes on northbound Interstate 405. WATs should be allowed to use HOV lanes and are already close to existing exemptions in law—they can carry seven passengers instead of eight and contract with public transit. They would be willing to put on top lights when picking up customers or to have an amendment that allows access until 2020 when a study will begin.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Cindi Laws, Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Association; Amar Khan, WAT operator; CJ, WAT customer; Don Newman, WAT customer; Thomas Muething, WAT customer; Cheryl Monk, Self Advocates in Leadership.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.