

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2245

As Reported by House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to roundabouts.

Brief Description: Concerning roundabouts.

Sponsors: Representatives Barkis, Ramos, Goehner and Boehnke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/20/20, 2/5/20 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes the operator of a vehicle or combination of vehicles that is approaching and driving through a roundabout to deviate from the lane in which the operator is driving as necessary, with due regard for other traffic, if the operator is driving a vehicle that meets certain length or width minimums and is a semitrailer.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 31 members: Representatives Fey, Chair; Wylie, 1st Vice Chair; Slatter, 2nd Vice Chair; Valdez, 2nd Vice Chair; Barkis, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Young, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Boehnke, Chambers, Chapman, Dent, Doglio, Duerr, Dufault, Entenman, Eslick, Goehner, Gregerson, Irwin, Kloba, Lovick, McCaslin, Mead, Orcutt, Ortiz-Self, Paul, Ramos, Riccelli, Shewmake, Van Werven and Volz.

Staff: Jennifer Harris (786-7143).

Background:

A vehicle passing around a rotary traffic island must be driven to the right of the island. Whenever a roadway is divided into two or more clearly marked lanes for traffic, a vehicle

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must be driven as nearly as practicable entirely within a single lane and may not be moved from the lane until the driver concludes that the movement can safely be made.

It is unlawful for any person to operate on public roadways any vehicle with an overall length, with or without load, in excess of 40 feet, subject to the following exceptions:

- a municipal transit vehicle;
- an auto stage (which carries passengers and/or incidental baggage and freight), private carrier bus, school bus, or motor home with an overall length no greater than 46 feet;
- an articulated auto stage with an overall length no greater than 61 feet (excluding a bike rack up to 4 feet long); and
- an auto recycling carrier up to 42 feet in length manufactured prior to 2005.

It is unlawful for any person to operate on public roadways any combination of vehicles consisting of a tractor and semitrailer that has a semitrailer length in excess of 53 feet or a combination consisting of a tractor and two trailers in which the combined length of the trailers exceeds 61 feet, with or without load, subject to certain exceptions, including specified exceptions for two trailers or semitrailers, a truck and trailer, a log truck and stinger-steered pole trailer, and vehicles transporting poles, pipe, machinery, or certain objects required for emergency public utility repair.

Federal law permits a maximum vehicle width of 8 feet on the Interstate Highway System, except for buses and commercial trucks, which are permitted to have a maximum vehicle width of 8.5 feet. Under state law, vehicle widths are limited to 8.5 feet on public roadways, unless a special permit is obtained for greater widths within certain maximum vehicle widths by roadway type. On two-lane roadways outside the limits of a city or town, a special permit may be obtained for vehicles with a maximum width of 14 feet.

A "semitrailer" includes every vehicle without motive power designed to be drawn by a vehicle, motor vehicle, or truck tractor, that is constructed so that an appreciable part of its weight and its load rests on and is carried by another vehicle, motor vehicle, or truck tractor.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

A "circular intersection" is defined as an intersection characterized by a circular roadway, generally circular in design, located in the center of the intersection. It includes roundabouts, rotaries, and traffic circles.

The operator of a vehicle or combination of vehicles that meets the requirements for a semitrailer under state law and that has a total length in excess of 40 feet or a total width in excess of 10 feet may, with due regard for other traffic, deviate from the lane in which the operator is driving to the extent necessary to approach and drive through a roundabout.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill removes the requirement that the operator of the vehicle or combination of vehicles on the right yield the right-of-way to the vehicle or combination of vehicles on the left when the vehicle is above a specified length or width and they are approaching the roundabout at approximately the same time or close enough to one another to constitute a collision hazard.

The substitute bill also replaces the definition of "roundabout" with a definition for "circular intersection," a category defined to include roundabouts, rotaries, and traffic circles, and makes a technical correction by moving the definition to the Motor Vehicle Title of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) from the Public Highways and Transportation Title of the RCW.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This is a common sense piece of legislation that helps clarify statutes on what the process is for yielding the right of way when a truck is in a roundabout. It addresses safety concerns that arise when multiple vehicles are entering roundabouts to avoid collisions. Roundabouts are increasingly being used to more efficiently move traffic, especially on major highways.

Trucks need to use multiple lanes in roundabouts, and other vehicles should not be traveling next to them when they do. Similar laws in Indiana and Wisconsin have worked well to help educate the public and establish the rules of the road. The state has already done a good job educating the public on four-way intersections. There is not even a definition of roundabout in current state law.

Contract loggers strongly support the bill because of the challenges loggers face in hauling equipment through a roundabout. Truck-trailer combinations require the trailer to use a significant amount of the other lane while traveling through a roundabout.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Barkis, prime sponsor; Jeff DeVere, Washington Trucking Associations; and Jerrold Bonagofsky, Washington Contract Loggers Association, Inc.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.