

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2684

As Passed House:
February 13, 2020

Title: An act relating to traffic control signals.

Brief Description: Concerning traffic control signals.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Shewmake, Slatter, Rude, Ortiz-Self and Kloba).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/30/20, 2/5/20 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/13/20, 66-30.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Applies the rules for traffic control signals that apply to circular signal indicators when they are green, yellow, and red to traffic control signals that use colored lighted symbols.
- Authorizes traffic control signals to be restricted to specific users of the public way through the use of specific symbols.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 21 members: Representatives Fey, Chair; Wylie, 1st Vice Chair; Slatter, 2nd Vice Chair; Valdez, 2nd Vice Chair; Barkis, Ranking Minority Member; Boehnke, Chapman, Doglio, Duerr, Entenman, Goehner, Gregerson, Irwin, Kloba, Lovick, Mead, Ortiz-Self, Paul, Ramos, Riccelli and Shewmake.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Young, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chambers, Dent, Dufault, Eslick, McCaslin, Orcutt, Van Werven and Volz.

Staff: Jennifer Harris (786-7143).

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.

Background:

Only the colors green, yellow, and red may be used by traffic control signals that use different colored lights or different colored arrows successively one at a time, with the exception of pedestrian signals that display a word or legend. Traffic control signal rules apply to drivers of vehicles, pedestrians, and personal delivery devices.

When used by circular signal indicators, the different colors used by traffic control signals indicate the following:

- Vehicle operators facing a circular green signal may proceed straight through or turn right or left unless a sign prohibits a turn movement. Vehicles turning right or left must stop to allow other vehicles lawfully within the intersection to complete their movements and pedestrians or personal delivery devices that are lawfully within the intersection to cross the roadway.
- Vehicle operators facing a steady circular yellow signal are being warned that the green signal is being terminated or that a red signal will soon be exhibited, and must stop for pedestrians or personal delivery devices that are lawfully within the intersection.
- Vehicle operators facing a steady circular red signal must stop, but after stopping may proceed to make a right or left turn as permitted by law once other vehicles lawfully within or approaching the intersection complete their movements and as long as there are no pedestrians or personal delivery devices lawfully within the intersection.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Only the colors green, yellow, and red may be used by traffic control signals that use different colored lighted symbols, with the exception of pedestrian signals. Colors used by traffic control signals using colored lighted symbols have the same meaning as colors used by circular signal indicators. Traffic control signals may be restricted to specific users of the public way through the use of specific symbols and, where appropriate, associated signs.

The exception for pedestrian signals that mandates the use of specified colors for traffic control signals applies to pedestrian control signals that are authorized under state law.

The phrase "vehicle operators" replaces the phrase "drivers of vehicles" to provide clarification on when traffic control signal rules apply—however, both terms have the same meaning under state law.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on February 6, 2020.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) It is not currently clear if bicycles can be used as a signal symbol. The City of Bellingham is using one of these for bicycles, but it is not clear whether this is authorized under state law. The purpose of this bill is to make clear that cities can use these types of signals. The bill would allow for the unambiguous use of bicycle signal faces in current and future projects to promote active transportation choices, enhance safety, and improve roadway experiences.

This bill makes state law clearly compatible with Federal Highway Administration's interim approval for the optional use of bicycle signal faces issued in 2013, which allows for the use of these signals. The Washington State Department of Transportation has proposed further clarifying language to ensure that this rule can be applied to the final rule that is incorporated in a future update to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, and so that state law can be applied to other modes of transportation that are currently being used or that will be used in the future.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Shewmake, prime sponsor; and Brennan Kidd, City of Tacoma.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.