

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1793

As of April 25, 2019

Title: An act relating to establishing additional uses for automated traffic safety cameras for traffic congestion reduction and increased safety.

Brief Description: Establishing additional uses for automated traffic safety cameras for traffic congestion reduction and increased safety.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Fitzgibbon, Pettigrew, Macri, Valdez, Fey, Cody, Senn, Springer, Pollet and Tarleton).

Brief History: Passed House: 4/15/19, 57-41.

Committee Activity: Transportation: 4/24/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows cities over 500,000 to create a pilot program expanding the use of automated traffic safety cameras to issue infraction notices for violations related to: stopping at an intersection or crosswalk or when traffic is obstructed, using public transportation only lanes, stopping or traveling in a restricted lane, and stopping in locations restricted for emergency vehicles or public transportation vehicles.
- Broadens the locations at which an automated traffic safety camera may be used for the pilot.
- Limits the issuance of infractions during the pilot to a warning for the first violation.
- Requires that a city report back to the Legislature on the number of cameras and infractions issued and to make recommendations on use of automated cameras to detect the listed violations.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Kim Johnson (786-7472)

Background: Under current law, local governments may adopt an ordinance authorizing using automated traffic safety cameras to detect stoplight, railroad crossing, or school speed

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zone violations. Camera use is restricted to the intersection of two arterials, railroad crossings, and school speed zones. The camera locations must be posted with signs 30 days prior to the start of enforcement. The local government must publish an annual report on its website of the number of accidents that occurred at each location where a camera is located, as well as, the number of infraction notices issued for each camera

A notice of traffic infraction must be mailed to the registered owner of the vehicle within 14 days of the violation. A law enforcement officer must issue the notice of infraction and must include a certificate stating the facts supporting the notice. The cameras may only take pictures of the vehicle and vehicle's license plate while an infraction is occurring, and must not reveal the face of the driver or passengers. Photos and electronic images are not available to the public and may not be used in a court in a pending action or proceeding unless that action or proceeding relates to a traffic infraction for which their use has been authorized.

Infractions detected through the use of cameras are not part of the registered owner's driving record. Infractions generated by the use of automated traffic safety cameras are processed in the same manner as parking infractions. The fine issued for an infraction detected through the use of an automated traffic safety camera may not exceed the amount of a fine issued for other parking infractions within the jurisdiction.

The registered owner of a vehicle is held responsible for the infraction unless the registered owner states under oath in a written statement to the court or in testimony before the court, the vehicle was stolen or in the care, custody, or control of some other person at the time of the infraction.

Summary of Bill: Automated Traffic Safety Camera Expansion Pilot Program. A pilot program is established through the end of 2021 for cities with populations greater than 500,000 people to adopt an ordinance authorizing the use of automated traffic safety cameras to detect the following violations:

- stopping when traffic obstructed;
- stopping at intersection or crosswalk;
- public transportation only lane;
- stopping or traveling in a restricted lane; and
- stopping or parking at locations restricted for emergency response vehicle entry or exit or the boarding or disembarking of public transportation vehicles, including public ferries.

The same rules and restrictions applicable to the use of automated traffic safety cameras apply to the use of automated traffic safety cameras for the violations specified above during the pilot program, except that an analysis of the locations where these cameras are proposed to be located is not required prior to the enactment of an ordinance allowing their use.

Camera Locations for Pilot Program. The use of automated traffic safety cameras under current law is expanded for the pilot program by also allowing cameras at midblock on arterials and at the intersection of two or more arterials. However, the use of the cameras for the pilot is further limited to the following locations:

1. the portion of state and local roadways in downtown areas used for office, commercial, retail shopping, support services, and mixed residential uses.
2. the portion of state and local roadways in areas within 0.5 mile surrounding the boundaries of the downtown areas specified in (1) above.
3. the portion of non-interstate freeways that travel into and out of the surrounding areas identified in (2) above for up to 3 miles.
4. the portion of roadway systems connected to these non-interstate freeway segments that are arterial roadways for up to 1 mile from their intersection with the non-interstate freeways specified above.

Warnings and Infractions. Under the pilot program, until January 1, 2020, a warning notice with no penalty must be issued to the registered owner of the vehicle for a violation generated through the use of an automated traffic safety camera. Beginning January 1, 2020, a warning notice with no penalty must be issued to the registered owner of the vehicle for a first violation generated—as of January 1, 2020—through the use of an automated traffic safety camera. A notice of infraction may be issued for subsequent violations.

Delivery Truck Exception. Trucks that park in lanes restricted for public transportation or high-occupancy vehicle use for the purpose of making deliveries between 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. may only receive a warning notice with no penalty.

Penalty Distribution. For violations issued under the pilot program, 50 percent of the non-interest money received by a city in excess of the cost to install, operate, and maintain the automated traffic safety cameras must be remitted to the state treasurer and must be deposited in the Highway Safety Fund.

Report. A report must be provided to the transportation committees of the Legislature by June 30, 2021, by any city that implements this pilot program. The report must include the following:

- locations chosen for the automated traffic safety cameras;
- total number of traffic infractions issued;
- number of traffic infractions issued to individuals whose vehicle is registered outside of the county in which the city is located;
- safety and on-time performance statistics related to the impact on driver behavior; and
- any recommendations on the use of automated traffic safety cameras to enforce the violations they were authorized to detect in the pilot program.

Camera Location After Pilot Expiration. After the expiration of the pilot, the types of locations where automated traffic safety cameras are permitted is expanded from intersections of two arterials with traffic control signals with specified yellow change intervals to intersections of two or more arterials with traffic control signals with specified yellow change intervals.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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: PRO: Cameras play a critical role to enable law enforcement to safely and efficiently meet its obligations. Right now these violations can only be enforced by law enforcement officers. This is resource intensive, and reduces the availability of officers to respond to emergent issues. Officers must take up a lane of travel, disrupting traffic, and potentially resulting in unsafe driving behavior. Officers are seriously injured or killed when hit issuing tickets.

I am visually impaired and when crosswalks are blocked I have to move out into traffic to cross the street. This is dangerous. When vehicles "block the box" at intersections, which is very common, this prevents wheelchair users from being able to finish crossing the street because the sidewalk ramp is blocked. They are forced to move into traffic, which results in wheelchair users being struck by vehicles. Drivers need to be more aware and this bill will help.

Seattle is reaching a period of maximum constraint for traffic due to project construction in the city. Traffic in Seattle is increasingly congested and when people use transit only lanes it delays transit schedules. Cameras have been used in other cities and it has made a difference.

CON: This is taxation by citation. Voters hate ticketing cameras. Voters have rejected the use of traffic cameras every single time. People do not like companies profiting off law enforcement. With this bill the state is taking part of the "crack" of that ticket money. The camera companies are doing this for the money.

OTHER: Automated enforcement imposes some problems that a camera just can not see. Trucks often try to leave space in front of them to allow for them to move through an intersection, but often cars will merge into that space and then the truck gets stuck in the intersection and they will be issued a ticket. The camera does not capture what happened. We hope we can work to try to address this potential problem.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Anna Zivarts, Rooted in Rights; Sean O'Donnell, Captain, Seattle Police Department; Keiko Budech, Transportation Choices Coalition.

CON: Tim Eyman, citizen.

OTHER: Jeff DeVere, Washington Trucking Association.

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