

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6580

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 10, 2020

Title: An act relating to organ transport vehicles.

Brief Description: Concerning organ transport vehicles.

Sponsors: Senator Mullet.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/29/20, 2/10/20 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates an organ transport vehicle classification licensed by the Department of Health that can use lights, sirens, and signal preemption devices for transporting an emergency organ.
- Authorizes the Washington State Department of Transportation and local governments to allow organ transport vehicles into their high-occupancy vehicle lanes.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hobbs, Chair; Saldaña, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Member; Cleveland, Das, Lovelett, Nguyen, O'Ban, Padden, Randall, Takko, Wilson, C. and Zeiger.

Staff: Erica Bramlet (786-7321)

Background: Emergency Vehicles. In current law, authorized emergency vehicles include vehicles of any fire department, police department, sheriff's office, coroner, prosecuting attorney, Washington State Patrol (WSP), ambulance service, and any other vehicle authorized by WSP. Authorized emergency vehicles must be equipped with a siren audible from, and at least one red light visible from, at least 500 feet away. When responding to an emergency, authorized emergency vehicles are also allowed to use signal preemption devices to allow the emergency vehicle the right-of-way. They may also break some traffic laws,

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including proceeding past a stop sign, exceeding speed limits, and disregarding regulations governing direction of movement, among others.

WSP may issue one-year renewable authorized emergency vehicle permits for additional types of vehicles not listed in the statute. WSP requires the applicant to submit vehicle registration and proof of insurance; descriptions of the emergency purpose and statutory authority; description of the emergency equipment to be used; operator personal information; and certification from the chief law enforcement officer of each primary jurisdiction the vehicle is to be used in—subject to that officer's restrictions. The applicant must also get its equipment inspected by WSP, and maintain a log of each time they use the emergency vehicle.

High-Occupancy Vehicle Lane Policy. Current law allows the Washington State Department of Transportation (DOT) and local authorities to reserve portions of the highway under their jurisdiction as high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes for 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 if such use does not interfere with the efficiency, reliability, and safety of public transportation operations.

DOT's administrative code currently allows all of the possible exemptions into the lanes, with private transportation provider vehicles' capacity set at 16 passengers instead of 8. They also allow officially marked and on-duty law enforcement and fire department vehicles into the HOV lanes.

Organ Procurement Organizations. Organ procurement organizations are designated by the secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). According to the HHS, two organ procurement organizations are currently affiliated with Washington State.

Summary of Bill: A classification similar to authorized emergency vehicles is created for organ transport vehicles, which can be either operated or contracted out by an organ procurement organization. Organ transport vehicles must be clearly and identifiably marked as such on all sides, and must be equipped with a siren audible from, and at least one red light visible from, at least 500 feet away. Organ transport vehicles are authorized to use signal preemption devices. The organ transport vehicles may only use the sirens, lights, and signal preemption devices during an organ transport deemed an emergency, and are required to contact WSP before transport if practicable.

Drivers of other vehicles are obligated to yield right-of-way and stop on the righthand side of the road if possible. Organ transport vehicle drivers are required to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons using the highway.

DOT and local authorities are authorized to allow organ transport vehicles into their HOV lanes, regardless of the number of passengers.

DOH must develop minimum requirements and issue the organ transport vehicles two-year renewable licenses, which must be prominently displayed on the vehicles.

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: Transporting organs has a similar sense of urgency to other emergency vehicles needing to get from point A to point B, but there is currently nothing in statute that defines organ transport vehicles and how they could do that. The organizations in Washington have a large service area, with many transplants taking place outside the state, which makes it logistically challenging to get organs to a patient in a timely manner on the ground. Currently the organ procurement organizations in Washington use ambulances when it is time-sensitive, and this bill would allow those critical resources to be left to patients that need them. For example, a flight from Alaska to Seattle is three hours, whereas the tolerance time for hearts and lungs is four to six hours, which highlights the criticality of expedited ground travel. There is no cost, and no one is opposed.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Mark Mullet, Prime Sponsor; Vicki Christophersen, Life Center Northwest.

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