
Transportation Committee

HB 1142

Brief Description: Authorizing the installation of auto mall directional signs on state highways.

Sponsors: Representatives Hoff, Wylie and Vick.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to install and maintain auto mall directional signs on a state highway right-of-way when an auto mall is within 1.5 miles of the highway (and other specified requirements are met).
- Mandates that the WSDOT collect a reasonable fee from auto mall vehicle dealers based on the cost of installation and maintenance of the auto mall directional signs.

Hearing Date: 1/26/21

Staff: Jennifer Harris (786-7143).

Background:

Certain Commercial Business Signs on Highways.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) may erect and maintain motorist information sign panels within the right of way of:

- interstate highways to provide information related to gas, food, lodging, camping or tourist-oriented businesses that are located on a crossroad at or near an interchange; and
- non-interstate highways to provide information related to gas, food, lodging, recreation, or tourist-oriented businesses accessible through the use of highways that intersect the non-interstate highway.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

No more than six business signs may be included on a sign panel.

For signs placed on interstate highways, gas, food, and lodging activities must be located within three miles of the highway, and camping or tourist-oriented activities must be located within five miles.

For signs placed on non-interstate highways, gas, food, lodging, recreation, and tourist-oriented activities must be located within five miles of the non-interstate highway. Signs may not be placed to direct a motorist to an activity visible from the main traveled roadways, tourist-oriented businesses must be located within 15 miles of the state highway, and any necessary supplemental signing must be placed on local roads before the installations of signs on the state highway.

If no eligible services are located within the above distances for a certain service type, the distance limits are increased until an eligible service of that type qualifies, up to a maximum of 15 miles. Signs may be placed on an alternate route that is greater than 15 miles if it is safer and provides reasonable and convenient travel to an eligible service. The maximum distance is raised to 20 miles for services located in rural counties, or areas within counties, with average household incomes and unemployment rates below certain specified thresholds.

Motorist information sign panels must be installed within nine months of the WSDOT receiving the request. The WSDOT is required to charge sufficient fees for the display of sign panels and individual business signs to recover the costs of installation and maintenance.

The legislative body of any county, city, or town may erect or permit the erection of supplemental directional signs directing businesses that qualify for these signs in any location on, or adjacent to, the right-of-way of any roads or streets within their jurisdiction, and may charge appropriate fees to cover the cost of issuing permits, installation, and the maintenance of signs. Signs and their location must comply with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and any rules adopted by the WSDOT.

Regional Shopping Center Signs on Highways.

Regional shopping center directional signs are required to be erected and maintained on state highway right-of-way when:

1. the regional shopping center contains at least three major department stores that are owned by a national or regional retail chain organization;
2. there is at least 500,000 square feet of retail floor space available for the regional shopping center;
3. the shopping center is located within one mile of the state highway;
4. the shopping center generates at least 9,000 one-way vehicle trips to the center; and
5. sufficient space is available for the installation of the directional signs according to the MUTCD.

Supplemental follow-through directional signs are required at key decision points to direct motorists to a regional shopping center if it is not clearly visible from the point of exit from the main traveled way.

The WSDOT is required to collect a reasonable fee from the regional shopping center based on the cost of erection and maintenance of the directional signs.

Summary of Bill:

The WSDOT may erect and maintain auto mall directional signs on a state highway right-of-way when:

1. two or more vehicle dealerships of new vehicles with sales and service activities are present in the auto mall;
2. the auto mall is at least 20 acres large;
3. the auto mall is located within 1.5 miles of the state highway; and
4. sufficient space is available for the installation of the directional signs according to the MUTCD.

The WSDOT may erect and maintain supplemental follow-through directional signs if the auto mall is not clearly visible from the point of exit from the state highway.

The WSDOT is required to collect a reasonable fee from auto mall vehicle dealers based on the cost of erection and maintenance of the directional signs.

An "auto mall" includes any auto park, auto complex, auto row, and auto center. The following activities may be included in an auto mall:

- quick service lube and oil centers;
- financing of motor vehicles;
- parts sales;
- motor vehicle insurance;
- motor vehicle repair and detailing;
- motor vehicle registration and title services; and
- fleet sales.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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