

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 1655

PARTIAL VETO

C 262 L 22

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Encouraging the opening of safety rest areas to the public.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Griffey, Shewmake, Barkis, Eslick, Chase, Graham, Paul, Dent, Gilday, Jacobsen, Pollet, Riccelli, Frame, Young and Taylor).

House Committee on Transportation
Senate Committee on Transportation

Background:

Safety Rest Areas. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) owns and operates 47 safety rest areas across the state, most open to the public 24 hours a day. Features of the safety rest areas include parking, Americans with Disabilities Act–accessible restrooms, drinking water, traveler information, vending machines, picnic areas, public telephones, and more. The WSDOT estimates more than 23 million visitors used the state's safety rest areas in 2020 and all safety rest areas remained open during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Routine and Annual Maintenance of Safety Rest Areas. The WSDOT's maintenance staff routinely monitor and maintain the safety rest areas and regular maintenance activities include:

- cleaning restrooms;
- clearing gutters;
- landscape maintenance;
- sweeping sidewalks and parking areas;
- emptying trash cans; and
- other maintenance needs.

Maintenance staff also perform annual maintenance activities that generally require closure

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of the safety rest areas for about a week. Annual maintenance activities include:

- pressure washing and cleaning picnic tables;
- pressure washing sidewalks, other walkways, and gathering areas;
- performing landscape maintenance and dangerous tree removal;
- cleaning out catch basins and drainage systems for parking areas;
- repainting parking stalls and cleaning signs; and
- conducting other routine maintenance on light fixtures, hand dryers, and heating systems.

Long-Term Closures of Safety Rest Areas. Occasionally, the WSDOT must close rest areas for more than three months. These long-term closures may occur for one or more of the following reasons:

- seasonal conditions causing road closures;
- performing major repairs of roofing, heating, or plumbing systems;
- deep cleaning and sanitizing of parking areas to remove human excrement;
- performing major repairs of failed or vandalized systems; and
- staffing challenges.

Recent Public Safety Rest Area Closures. In January 2022, according to the WSDOT's website, several safety rest areas were closed: (1) two safety rest areas on Interstate 5 (I-5) were closed near the Canadian border for an estimated three months due to staffing issues; (2) one rest area on southbound I-5 near Everett was closed indefinitely for maintenance reasons; and (3) five other safety rest areas across the state were closed due to winter conditions.

Summary:

The WSDOT must reconfigure its maintenance operations to assure that state-owned and operated safety rest areas are open for use except for seasonal closures or cleaning, maintenance, and repairs.

The WSDOT may initiate a strategic planning process that addresses the maintenance, operation, and safety of its owned and operated safety rest areas. The department must engage members from the freight community and other stakeholders for recommendations and solutions. The department must also coordinate with the office of intergovernmental coordination on public right-of-way homeless encampments established in Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 5662 (right-of-way camping/housing) as part of the strategic planning process.

A report from the WSDOT on the changes made or planned to be made to operation of the safety rest areas is due to the transportation committees of the Legislature by January 15, 2023. The report must include recommendations related to commercial vehicle parking.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	96	0	
Senate	48	0	(Senate amended)
House	97	0	(House concurred)

Effective: June 9, 2022

Partial Veto Summary: The Governor vetoed the section of the bill describing the role that safety rest areas provide to help commercial truck drivers rest and operate safely.