

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1655

As of February 15, 2022

Title: An act relating to having safety rest areas open to the public as soon as possible.

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).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/9/22, 96-0.

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/17/22.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to 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.
- Allows WSDOT to initiate a strategic planning process that addresses the maintenance, operation, and safety of its owned and operated safety rest areas.
- Requires WSDOT to report to the transportation committees of the Legislature by January 15, 2023, regarding the changes made or planned to be made to operation of the safety rest areas, including recommendations related to commercial vehicle parking.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Daniel Masterson (786-7454)

Background: Safety Rest Areas. The Washington State Department of Transportation

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.

(WSDOT) owns and operates 47 safety rest areas across the state, most open to the public 24 hours a day. WSDOT estimates more than 23 million visitors used the state's safety rest areas in 2020.

Routine Maintenance of Safety Rest Areas. 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.

Annual Maintenance of Safety Rest Areas. Maintenance staff also perform annual maintenance activities that generally require closure 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 system 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, 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;
- performing major repairs of failed or vandalized systems; and
- staffing challenges.

Summary of Bill: WSDOT is directed to 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 change in structure may take advantage of the gig economy and restructure existing vacant employee positions to align with current needs to keep safety rest areas open.

WSDOT may initiate a strategic planning process that addresses the maintenance, operation, and safety of its owned and operated safety rest areas. At a minimum, this plan shall evaluate operations, maintenance, safety, and commercial motor vehicle parking at safety rest areas. WSDOT must engage members from the freight community and other stakeholders for recommendations and solutions. The plan must identify strategies that

WSDOT can employ to ensure commercial motor vehicle parking is available at state-owned and operated safety rest areas. WSDOT shall prioritize the planning effort to conclude by the end of the 2021-2023 biennium.

A report from 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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 12, 2022.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.