

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5556

As Passed Senate, February 25, 2025

Title: An act relating to modernizing the adopt-a-highway program to improve its ability to meet its original purpose within existing fiscal limitations.

Brief Description: Modernizing the adopt-a-highway program to improve its ability to meet its original purpose within existing fiscal limitations.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Ramos, Lovick, Valdez, Lovelett, Shewmake, Chapman, Trudeau, Nobles and Wilson, C.).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/06/25, 2/13/25 [DPS].

Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 2/25/25, 49-0.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Makes the Washington State Department of Transportation's Adopt-a-Highway Program and its authorization to recognize Adopt-a-Highway Program participants with signs contingent on availability of appropriations.
- Requires annual reporting to the Legislature and the Office of Financial Management with a list of Adopt-a-Highway Program applicants and participants and their compliance with Adopt-a-Highway Program obligations.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5556 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Lias, Chair; Lovick, Vice Chair; Ramos, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Member; Goehner, Assistant Ranking Member; Alvarado, Chapman, Christian,

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.

Cortes, Fortunato, Harris, Krishnadasan, Lovelett, MacEwen, Nobles, Shewmake, Valdez and Wilson, J..

Staff: Daniel Masterson (786-7454)

Background: The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) maintains a statewide Adopt-a-Highway Program in which volunteers, including businesses, are able to adopt sections of state highways, rest areas, park and ride lots, intermodal facilities, and other WSDOT facilities with the stated program goal of contributing to a cleaner environment, enhanced roadsides, and protection of wildlife habitats. Program participant responsibilities include litter control, and may also include responsibility for planting and maintaining vegetation, controlling weeds, graffiti removal, and other roadside improvement or cleanup activities.

WSDOT is required to maintain a standardized application form, registration form, and contractual agreement for the Adopt-a-Highway Program. WSDOT is also required to erect and maintain signs with Adopt-a-Highway Program participant names on each end of a section of highway that has been adopted.

WSDOT must seek partnerships that facilitate Adopt-a-Highway Program goals, and may solicit funding for the Adopt-a-Highway Program that permits private entities to finance the work to be done.

An organization with a name that endorses or opposes a particular candidate for public office; advocates a position on a specific political issue, initiative, referendum, or piece of legislation; or includes a reference to a political party may not participate in the Adopt-a-Highway Program.

WSDOT may install Adopt-a-Highway signs, subject to certain restrictions. Signs are required to be designed by the WSDOT, and may only include the words "Adopt-a-Highway litter control facility" or "Adopt-a-Highway litter control next XX miles" and the name of the Adopt-a-Highway Program sponsor. The sponsor's name may not be displayed more predominantly than the rest of sign message. Trademarks or business logos may be displayed.

The WSDOT is prohibited from accepting Adopt-a-Highway proposals that would result in the termination of classified employees or employee positions.

Summary of First Substitute Bill: WSDOT's authorization to establish the Adopt-a-Highway Program, and the requirement to recognize Adopt-a-Highway Program participants with signs, are conditioned on the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose in an Omnibus Transportation Appropriations Act, effective July 1, 2026.

WSDOT shall submit annually by December 1st to the Transportation Committees of the

Legislature and the Office of Financial Management a list in excel or similar electronic format that includes:

- each participating organization and program applicant;
- whether the participant or applicant partners with a paid contractor or acts solely as a volunteer;
- the location of each highway section adopted;
- whether the participant has met the obligations of its contractual agreement during the last year; and
- any contextual information WSDOT deems relevant.

The first report due in 2025 must include the participant's record of compliance with the obligations of its contractual agreement since becoming an Adopt-a-Highway Program participant, not just during the last year.

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 on First Substitute: PRO: I have a few constituents in my district that really hate litter. They hate it so much they've been going out on their own and picking it up. They do this on their own and get volunteers and friends to go with them. This is a great program to help clean-up work get done, save some money, and let volunteers get credit for it. I was part of an employee group that got to do this. It was great the first year, but by the time the second year rolled around it was pretty hard to get folks to go out there and pick up litter because it wasn't so much fun the second time around. It's a good thing that sponsors can pay for a trained contractor to go out and pick up litter because there are some stretches of road that are too dangerous for untrained volunteers. We're trying to update this 40-year-old program and make sure that folks are doing the job they committed to. We need to modernize the program and make sure that folks that are doing the work are getting credit for it.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Bill Ramos, Prime Sponsor.

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