

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5595

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 13, 2025

Title: An act relating to establishing shared streets.

Brief Description: Establishing shared streets.

Sponsors: Senators Alvarado, Lias, Frame, Nobles, Pedersen, Saldaña and Shewmake.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/10/25, 2/13/25 [DP, DNP, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows cities to designate shared streets where pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicular traffic share a portion or all of the same street.
- Allows cities to establish a 10 mile per hour maximum speed limit on a shared street.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Lias, Chair; Lovick, Vice Chair; Ramos, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Member; Alvarado, Chapman, Cortes, Harris, Krishnadasan, Lovelett, Nobles, Shewmake and Valdez.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Christian and Fortunato.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Goehner, Assistant Ranking Member; MacEwen.

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

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.

Background: Under current law, various provisions exist governing when, and under what circumstance, pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicular traffic may operate together on public highways. For example, where sidewalks are not provided or are inaccessible, pedestrians may walk on the highway facing traffic, either on the shoulder or as near as is practicable to the outside edge of the roadway. When walking along the roadway, pedestrians must exercise due care to avoid colliding with any vehicle upon the roadway. And when a vehicle is overtaking and passing a pedestrian or bicyclist, the driver must move into a left lane in the direction of travel or, if on a roadway with only one lane in the direction of travel, pass at a safe distance to avoid contact or move completely into the lane for traffic moving in the opposite direction when it is safe to do so.

Pedestrians are restricted in certain circumstances to where they may cross roadways and must yield to all vehicles when not crossing in a crosswalk. And bicyclists are subject to certain operating requirements when cycling upon a roadway, for example riding as near to the right side as is safe or as near to the left side as is safe, depending on the configuration of the roadway.

The following maximum speed limits are set in statute as a default, unless a special hazard exists that requires lower speed:

- 25 miles per hour on city and town streets;
- 50 miles per hour on county roads; and
- 60 miles per hour on state highways.

Local authorities may increase or decrease maximum speed limits after first conducting an engineering and traffic investigation finding that the maximum speed is greater or less than is reasonable and safe under the conditions upon a highway. Local authorities may establish a maximum speed limit of 20 miles per hour on a nonarterial highway without conducting an engineering and traffic investigation if procedures to that effect exist.

Summary of Bill: Cities may designate any nonarterial highway to be a shared street. A shared street is a city street where pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicular traffic share a portion or all of the same street. Cities may establish a maximum speed limit of 10 miles per hour on a shared street.

The following traffic provisions do not apply on a shared street:

- the conditions and limitations regarding pedestrians walking on roadways;
- the rules governing vehicles overtaking and passing pedestrians and bicyclists;
- the rules governing pedestrians crossing roadways; and
- certain operating requirements when cycling upon a roadway.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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: This bill creates a tool for cities to allow all traffic to share streets under certain conditions. It provides permissive authority to work with local communities to create a safe active environment. Walkable streets bring in more economic activity. The bill provides useful flexibility and the ten mile per hour speed limit helps keep the area safe. Many cities across the globe allow for shared streets. This bill allows cities to address the unique needs of their communities. Seattle and many communities across Washington State want this authority to allow for vibrant activity with traffic and people co-mingling. The law needs updating to provide a legal pathway to allow this activity.

CON: There is some amount of inherent risk allowing this activity even with a ten mile per hour speed limit, as stopping times are hard when a hazard occurs suddenly. Shared streets can be used to shut down businesses. With the GMA failures and increased operations of trucks, this bill will result in many conflicts between trucks and pedestrians in shared streets. The bill provides an illusion of safe streets.

OTHER: The trucking association supports active transportation, but some sideboards are needed in the bill to further ensure safety.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Emily Alvarado, Prime Sponsor; Venu Nemani, City of Seattle; Carl Schroeder, Association of Washington Cities; Mark Ostrow.

CON: Morgan Irwin, Association of Washington Business; john worthington.

OTHER: Jeff DeVere, Washington Trucking Associations.

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