
SENATE BILL 5556

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Senators Ramos, Lovick, Valdez, Lovelett, Shewmake, Chapman, Trudeau, Nobles, and C. Wilson

Read first time 01/28/25. Referred to Committee on Transportation.

1 AN ACT Relating to modernizing the adopt-a-highway program to
2 improve its ability to meet its original purpose within existing
3 fiscal limitations; amending RCW 47.40.100 and 47.36.400; adding a
4 new section to chapter 47.40 RCW; creating a new section; and
5 providing an effective date.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature recognizes that the
8 state's adopt-a-highway program has enabled individuals and groups to
9 participate in keeping the state's highways clean and that the
10 program has been successful for over 30 years in helping to reduce
11 litter in Washington. The legislature further finds that the program
12 requires a modernization to ensure the original purpose of providing
13 volunteers and businesses an opportunity to contribute to a cleaner
14 environment, enhanced roadsides, and protection of wildlife habitats
15 is fulfilled.

16 (2) The legislature further finds that transportation funding
17 resources are limited and the needs are great. Therefore, the
18 legislature intends to add additional accountability to the program
19 and ensure that the department of transportation's limited resources
20 can be directed to areas with the greatest need.

1 (3) To that end, the legislature intends to (a) prioritize
2 funding for the program in alignment with priorities for the
3 transportation system as a whole, and (b) ensure that volunteers and
4 businesses are committed to the goals of the program and are provided
5 the opportunity to participate, to the extent funds are available.

6 **Sec. 2.** RCW 47.40.100 and 2019 c 353 s 11 are each amended to
7 read as follows:

8 (1) (a) ~~((The))~~ Subject to the availability of amounts
9 appropriated for this specific purpose in an omnibus transportation
10 appropriations act, the department of transportation shall establish
11 a statewide adopt-a-highway program. The purpose of the program is to
12 provide volunteers and businesses an opportunity to contribute to a
13 cleaner environment, enhanced roadsides, and protection of wildlife
14 habitats. Participating volunteers and businesses shall adopt
15 department-designated sections of state highways, rest areas, park
16 and ride lots, intermodal facilities, and any other facilities the
17 department deems appropriate, in accordance with rules adopted by the
18 department. The department may elect to coordinate a consortium of
19 participants for adopt-a-highway projects.

20 (b) The adopt-a-highway program shall include, at a minimum,
21 litter control for the adopted section, and may include additional
22 responsibilities such as planting and maintaining vegetation,
23 controlling weeds, graffiti removal, and any other roadside
24 improvement or clean-up activities the department deems appropriate.
25 Whenever possible, when planting and maintaining vegetation,
26 volunteers and businesses should use native forage plants that are
27 pollen-rich or nectar-rich and beneficial for all pollinators,
28 including honey bees, in order to develop habitat beneficial for the
29 feeding, nesting, and reproduction of pollinators. The department
30 shall not accept adopt-a-highway proposals that would have the effect
31 of terminating classified employees or classified employee positions.

32 (2) A volunteer group or business choosing to participate in the
33 adopt-a-highway program must submit a proposal to the department. The
34 department shall review the proposal for consistency with
35 departmental policy and rules. The department may accept, reject, or
36 modify an applicant's proposal.

37 (3) The department shall seek partnerships with volunteer groups
38 and businesses to facilitate the goals of this section. The
39 department may solicit funding for the adopt-a-highway program that

1 allows private entities to undertake all or a portion of financing
2 for the initiatives. The department shall develop guidelines
3 regarding the cash, labor, and in-kind contributions to be performed
4 by the participants.

5 (4) An organization whose name: (a) Endorses or opposes a
6 particular candidate for public office, (b) advocates a position on a
7 specific political issue, initiative, referendum, or piece of
8 legislation, or (c) includes a reference to a political party shall
9 not be eligible to participate in the adopt-a-highway program.

10 (5) In administering the adopt-a-highway program, the department
11 shall:

12 (a) Provide a standardized application form, registration form,
13 and contractual agreement for all participating groups. The forms
14 shall notify the prospective participants of the risks and
15 responsibilities to be assumed by the department and the
16 participants;

17 (b) Require all participants to be at least fifteen years of age;

18 (c) Require parental consent for all minors;

19 (d) Require at least one adult supervisor for every eight minors;

20 (e) Require one designated leader for each participating
21 organization, unless the department chooses to coordinate a
22 consortium of participants;

23 (f) Assign each participating organization a section or sections
24 of state highway, or other state-owned transportation facilities, for
25 a specified period of time;

26 (g) (~~Recognize~~) Subject to the availability of amounts
27 appropriated for this specific purpose in an omnibus transportation
28 appropriations act, recognize the efforts of a participating
29 organization by erecting and maintaining signs with the
30 organization's name on both ends of the organization's section of
31 highway;

32 (h) Provide appropriate safety equipment. Safety equipment issued
33 to participating groups must be returned to the department upon
34 termination of the applicable adopt-a-highway agreement;

35 (i) Provide safety training for all participants;

36 (j) Pay any and all premiums or assessments required under RCW
37 51.12.035 to secure medical aid benefits under chapter 51.36 RCW for
38 all volunteers participating in the program;

1 (k) Require participating businesses to pay all employer premiums
2 or assessments required to secure medical aid benefits under chapter
3 51.36 RCW for all employees or agents participating in the program;

4 (l) Maintain records of all injuries and accidents that occur;

5 (m) Adopt rules that establish a process to resolve any question
6 of an organization's eligibility to participate in the adopt-a-
7 highway program;

8 (n) Obtain permission from property owners who lease right-of-way
9 before allowing an organization to adopt a section of highway on such
10 leased property; and

11 (o) Establish procedures and guidelines for the adopt-a-highway
12 program.

13 (6) Nothing in this section affects the rights or activities of,
14 or agreements with, adjacent landowners, including the use of rights-
15 of-way and crossings, nor impairs these rights and uses by the
16 placement of signs.

17 (7) The department shall submit annually by December 1st to the
18 transportation committees of the legislature and the office of
19 financial management a list in excel or similar electronic format
20 that includes: (a) Each participating organization; (b) whether the
21 participant partners with a paid contractor or acts solely as a
22 volunteer; (c) the location of each highway section adopted; (d)
23 whether the participant has met the obligations of its contractual
24 agreement during the last year; and (e) any contextual information
25 the department deems relevant.

26 **Sec. 3.** RCW 47.36.400 and 1998 c 180 s 1 are each amended to
27 read as follows:

28 ((The)) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for
29 this specific purpose in an omnibus transportation appropriations
30 act, the department may install adopt-a-highway signs, with the
31 following restrictions:

32 (1) Signs shall be designed by the department and may only
33 include the words "adopt-a-highway litter control facility" or
34 "adopt-a-highway litter control next XX miles" and the name of the
35 litter control area sponsor. The sponsor's name shall not be
36 displayed more predominantly than the remainder of the sign message.
37 Trademarks or business logos may be displayed;

38 (2) Signs may be placed along interstate, primary, and scenic
39 system highways;

1 (3) Signs may be erected at other state-owned transportation
2 facilities in accordance with RCW 47.40.100(1);

3 (4) For each litter control area designated by the department,
4 one sign may be placed visible to traffic approaching from each
5 direction;

6 (5) Signs shall be located so as not to detract from official
7 traffic control signs installed pursuant to the manual on uniform
8 traffic control devices adopted by the department;

9 (6) Signs shall be located so as not to restrict sight distance
10 on approaches to intersections or interchanges;

11 (7) The department may charge reasonable fees to defray the cost
12 of manufacture, installation, and maintenance of adopt-a-highway
13 signs.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 47.40
15 RCW to read as follows:

16 By December 1, 2025, the department shall report to the
17 transportation committees of the legislature and the office of
18 financial management with a list in excel or similar electronic
19 format that includes the following information for each current
20 participant in the adopt-a-highway program established in RCW
21 47.40.100:

22 (1) Name of the participating volunteer group or sponsor;

23 (2) Whether the participant partners with a paid contractor or
24 acts solely as a volunteer;

25 (3) The location of each highway section adopted;

26 (4) The participant's record of compliance with the obligations
27 of its contractual agreement since becoming a program participant;
28 and

29 (5) Any contextual information the department deems relevant.

30 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** If any provision of this act or its
31 application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the
32 remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other
33 persons or circumstances is not affected.

34 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** Sections 2 and 3 of this act take effect
35 July 1, 2026.

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