

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2820

As Reported by House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to speed limits on state highways adjacent to certain cities and towns.

Brief Description: Concerning speed limits on state highways adjacent to certain cities and towns.

Sponsors: Representatives Condotta, Armstrong, Haler and Williams.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/4/08, 2/6/08 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Washington State Department of Transportation to set a lower maximum speed limit within city limits on a state highway, when requested to do so by a city with a population of fewer than 1,500.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 25 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Ericksen, Ranking Minority Member; Schindler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Armstrong, Campbell, Dickerson, Eddy, Herrera, Hudgins, Jarrett, Kristiansen, Loomis, Rodne, Rolfes, Sells, Simpson, Smith, Springer, Takko, Upthegrove, Wallace, Warnick, Williams and Wood.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Flannigan, Vice Chair.

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

State law sets the maximum speed limit at 25 miles per hour on city and town streets, 50 miles per hour on county roads, and 60 miles per hour on state highways. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and local authorities may increase or decrease these speed limits within designated ranges on the basis of engineering and traffic investigations,

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but the alteration of a speed limit on a state highway must be approved by the Secretary of Transportation.

Speed limits are generally set to reflect the speed at which most motorists naturally drive, which is usually done by determining the speed that 85 percent of the vehicles on a roadway are traveling at or below. When setting speed limits, traffic engineers will also consider other relevant factors including:

- roadway characteristics such as shoulder condition, grade, alignment, and sight distance;
- roadside development and lighting;
- parking practices such as angled parking;
- pedestrian and bicycle activity;
- collision rates and traffic volume trends; and
- potential conflicts with vehicles entering the roadway.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

When requested to do so by a city with a population of fewer than 1,500, the WSDOT is required to set the maximum speed limit on a state highway at the limit requested by that city on any portion of the state highway within the city.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The authority of a city with a population of less than 1,500 to request a change in the speed limit of a state highway is limited to portions of a state highway within the city limits.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The dispute regarding a speed limit that led to this bill has been going on for more than 20 years, but the interest in the bill and the authority that it grants has now spread far beyond this one dispute.

Cities should be able to make their own determinations regarding the speed limits on the state highways that run through them.

Entiat is located on the Cascade Loop, and as the alternate route on the loop, it should not be an area where people need to move quickly. The area the requested speed limit change would effect is a commercial corridor where housing subdivisions are starting to go in. The speed

limit on part of the corridor has been lowered to 50 miles per hour but it needs to be lower on the entire corridor.

(Concerns) Speed limits take into account the characteristics of the area where they are imposed. The limits are designed to follow the driving patterns in the area, so they can be self-policing. Collisions occur where there are significant differences in speed between the vehicles traveling on a route.

Speed limits are set with the needs of the cities taken into account. A review of a speed limit is triggered by a request from a city, or by the identification of unsafe corridors through the analysis of collision data by the WSDOT.

Passing this bill would create inconsistencies between the treatment afforded large and small cities. It also might lead to an increase in small town speed traps.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Condotta, prime sponsor; Keith Vradenburg, Mayor, City of Entiat; and John Huselton, Entiat Chamber of Commerce.

(Concerns) Ted Trepanier, Washington State Department of Transportation.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.