
Transportation Committee

SSB 6346

Brief Description: Expanding the use of certain electric vehicles.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Ranker, Haugen, Regala, Rockefeller, Pridemore, Marr, King, Fraser, Swecker, Kilmer, Shin, Tom, Kohl-Welles and Kline).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Allows a person to operate a neighborhood electric vehicle (NEV) or medium electric vehicle (MEV) on city and county streets and county roads in San Juan County with a speed limit of 45 miles per hour (mph) or less.
- Changes the minimum speed of a MEV from 30 mph to 25 mph.

Hearing Date: 2/17/10

Staff: Jerry Long (786-7306).

Background:

Under Washington law, it is a traffic infraction for any person to drive or move a motor vehicle on any public road if the vehicle does not meet safety and equipment standards specified by federal code, state statute, or agency rule.

There are two type of neighborhood electric vehicles:

- Neighborhood electric vehicles (NEV) - NEVs are defined as being capable of traveling at least 20 miles per hour (mph), but not more than 25 mph. These vehicles must meet federal safety and equipment standards for low speed vehicles. Equipment standards for low-speed vehicles include headlights and tail lights, a windshield, mirrors, turn signals, and seat belts.
- Medium speed electric vehicles (MEV) - MEVs are defined as being capable of traveling at least 30 mph, but not more than 35 mph. These vehicles do not meet the safety and

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equipment standards of the higher speed vehicles, but must meet the requirements of the lower speed vehicles if they are to be operated on public roads.

Under Washington law, both NEVs and MEVs may be driven on city streets and county roads that are not state routes if the road has a speed limit of 35 mph or less. Both vehicle types must have a vehicle license, and operators must have a driver's license and liability insurance.

Local jurisdictions may prohibit NEVs on roads with a speed limit over 25 mph, and local jurisdictions may prohibit MEVs on roads with a speed limit over 35 mph.

Summary of Bill:

In counties consisting of islands whose only connection to the mainland are ferry routes, a person may operate a NEV and MEV on city streets and county roads that are not state routes if the road has a speed limit of 45 mph or less. Currently, the increased speed limit in this provision will apply to only San Juan County.

A NEV and MEV must not cross a roadway with a speed limit in excess of 45 mph, unless the crossing begins and ends on a roadway with a speed limit of 45 mph or less and occurs at an intersection of approximately 90 degrees.

The definition of MEV is changed to bring its minimum speed attainable down from more than 30 mph to more than 25 mph. The definition change eliminates a gap between the definitions of NEVs and MEVs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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