

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1793

As of April 1, 2009

Title: An act relating to alternative student transportation.

Brief Description: Addressing alternative student transportation.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Williams, Goodman, Nelson, White, Pedersen, Roberts, Upthegrove and Eddy).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/11/09, 83-13.

Committee Activity: Transportation: 3/31/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

Background: The federal Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005 established a Safe Routes to Schools Program (Program). The SAFETEA-LU provided funds to be administered by state departments of transportation to provide financial assistance to state, local, and regional agencies and nonprofit organizations for projects that improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

Beginning in 2005, Washington's transportation budget has provided state funds for the Program administered by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). The associated budget provisos require that the WSDOT identify cost-effective projects and submit a prioritized list to the Legislature. The WSDOT provides potential grant applicants information and training and issues an annual call for projects. The WSDOT also contracts with nonprofit organizations to provide information and technical assistance.

The WSDOT evaluates grant applications using a Safe Routes to Schools Advisory Board (Board) comprised of nine members, who use evaluation criteria developed by the agency consistent with guidelines for the Program outlined in SAFETEA-LU. The Board was abolished in February 2009 by Executive Order 09-02, "Rescission of Executive Orders and Elimination of Certain Boards and Commissions."

Summary of Bill: A "Safe Routes to School Program" is formally established in state law within the WSDOT. The purpose of the program is to (1) encourage children to walk and

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bicycle to school; (2) make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative; and (3) facilitate projects and activities that improve safety and reduce traffic in the vicinity of schools.

The WSDOT must administer a competitive grant program for the Safe Routes to School Program, using specified guidelines, and must provide various types of support to grantees awarded grants under the program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill codifies an existing program at the WSDOT. It will continue to help children become healthy, active, and safe as they travel to school. The bill helps children safely get to school ready to learn. The program also helps reduce child obesity rates.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Williams, prime sponsor; Lisa Quinn, Feet First; Denisse Haney, Washington Elementary School/Walking School Bus; Michael Shaw, American Heart Association.