

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6207

As Amended by House, March 3, 2010

Title: An act relating to allowing local governments to create golf cart zones.

Brief Description: Allowing local governments to create golf cart zones.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senator Haugen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/12/10, 1/18/10 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 2/10/10, 45-0.

Passed House: 3/03/10, 96-2.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6207 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Marr, Vice Chair; Swecker, Ranking Minority Member; Becker, Benton, Berkey, Delvin, Eide, Hatfield, Jacobsen, Kauffman, Kilmer, King, Ranker and Sheldon.

Staff: Wendy Malkin (786-7434)

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 motor vehicle does not meet safety and equipment standards specified by statute or agency rule.

Two types of vehicles, neighborhood electric vehicles (NEVs) and medium-speed electric vehicles (MEVs), may be operated, within certain conditions, on public roads even though these vehicles do not meet the safety and equipment standards required of higher speed vehicles. However, these vehicles must meet federal safety and equipment standards for low-speed vehicles. Under federal rule, a low-speed vehicle is defined as being capable of traveling at least 20 miles per hour (mph) but not more than 25 mph.

Under Washington law, NEVs are defined as capable of traveling at least 20 mph but not more than 25 mph. MEVs are defined as being capable of traveling at least 30 mph but not more than 35 mph.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Most golf carts, as originally manufactured, have a top speed of less than 20 mph.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Cities or counties may create golf cart zones by ordinance or resolution. The ordinance or resolution must be for the purposes of permitting incidental use of golf carts on public roads that have speed limits of 25 mph or less.

Golf cart drivers within golf cart zones are subject to the same rules of the road as vehicle drivers. Other than rules of the road, golf carts and golf cart drivers within golf cart zones are not subject to motor vehicle provisions, including provisions on non-highway and off-road vehicles, vehicle licensing, driver licensing, safety and equipment standards, seat belt use, and child restraint system use. However, a person operating a golf cart on public roads in golf cart zones must be at least 16 years old and must have either completed a driver education course or have previous experience driving as a licensed driver. In addition, a person who has a revoked license is prohibited from operating golf carts on public roads in golf cart zones.

Local jurisdictions that create golf cart zones may restrict the operation of golf carts to daylight hours. In addition, the jurisdictions may require a decal to be displayed on golf carts and may charge a fee for the decal.

Golf carts are defined as gas-powered or electric-powered four-wheeled vehicles, designed for use on a golf course, that cannot attain a speed higher than 20 mph.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: Golf courses are happy to work with local communities in any way they can. The ability to drive a golf cart on neighborhood streets, especially secluded streets of retirement communities, would be beneficial for many individuals, including seniors and disabled individuals who may not be able to drive or do not want to drive a regular car. Local jurisdictions should have the option to allow golf carts on public roads under certain conditions.

OTHER: Recommend that local jurisdictions be given the option to restrict the operation of golf carts to daylight hours. Generally, golf carts do not have adequate lighting. It would certainly be safer to have safety and equipment standards, but this probably is not realistic. It would be good to require safety belts. There should be some requirement for golf cart drivers to be licensed or at least have some instruction and familiarity with rules of the road. Individuals with a suspended license should not be able to operate golf carts on public roads.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Haugen, prime sponsor; Heather Hansen, Washington Golf Industry.

OTHER: Steve Lind, Washington Traffic Safety Commission; Jason Berry, Washington State Patrol.

House Amendment(s): The legislative authority of a city or county may prohibit the operation of golf carts in designated bicycle lanes that are within a golf cart zone.

The city or county that authorizes a golf cart zone must clearly identify the zone with signage that complies with the Department of Transportation's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

Golf carts operated within golf cart zones must be equipped with reflectors, seat belts, and rearview mirrors.

Accidents that involve golf carts operated within golf cart zones must be recorded and tracked in compliance with Chapter 46.52 RCW.

Golf cart occupants operating or riding in a golf cart within a golf cart zone are not exempt from the seatbelt requirements that apply to persons 16 years of age or older.