
Transportation Committee

HB 1726

Brief Description: Modifying certain vehicle registration renewal requirements.

Sponsors: Representatives Wylie, Roberts and Ryu.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Licensing (DOL) to provide education about and market the benefits derived from the \$5 voluntary donation for the State Parks Renewal and Stewardship Account.
- Changes license plate replacement from seven years to 10 years with an annual replacement fee of \$1.25 per plate instead of one fee at the time of replacement.
- Requires the DOL to provide license plate fasteners at plate replacement at the manufacturer's suggested retail price.
- Increases the plate replacement fee from \$10 to \$12.50.
- Requires the DOL to offer to owners on the tenth-year renewal notice the option of retaining their current license plate number.

Hearing Date: 2/26/13

Staff: Jerry Long (786-7306)

Background:

The State Parks Renewal and Stewardship Account (Account) receives state park receipts from user fees, concessions, leases, voluntary donations from vehicle registrations, and other state park based activities. The Account must be used for operating and maintaining state parks, developing and renovating park facilities, undertaking deferred maintenance, enhancing park stewardship, and other state park purposes.

License plates are replaced periodically to ensure maximum legibility and reflectivity. The Department of Licensing (DOL) in 1997 (Substitute House Bill 1008) was directed to use

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empirical studies to document the longevity of the reflective material used to make license plates and determine how often license plates need to be replaced, providing the DOL authorization to adopt rules for implementation. The DOL began replacing license plates under this program in 2000.

Research conducted when the program started indicated seven years as the most common replacement cycle among states with similar programs. In 2006 the DOL hired an independent consultant to study the seven-year replacement program. At that time some states had license plate replacement programs that ranged from five years to 10 years. The manufacturer's warranty on the license plate materials is five years. The states surveyed had an average replacement cycle of 6.8 years. The seven-year license plate replacement period is in Washington Administrative Code.

There are a few type of plates that are exempt from the plate replacement program. These are: prorated vehicles over 16,000 pounds; commercial vehicles with a declared gross weight over 26,000 pounds; collector vehicle plates; horseless carriage vehicle restored plates; plates issued to government agencies with exempt use class; and Medal of Honor license plates.

The plate replacement plate fee is \$10 per plate and \$2 for the reflective fee or \$24 for a set of license plates. If a vehicle wishes to retain their existing license plate number, for a fee of \$10 per plate the person will receive a new plate(s) with that number.

Summary of Bill:

The bill requires the DOL to provide education about and market the benefits derived from the \$5 voluntary donation for the Account.

The bill places in statute a 10-year replacement schedule replacing the existing seven-year schedule in the DOL rules. At each initial and registration renewal periods up to the tenth year of registration, \$1.25 is collected for each license plate for replacement at the tenth-year renewal. Any replacement license plate fee amounts not collected during the ten-year period must be collected on the tenth year of registration renewal.

The bill requires the DOL at the time license plates are replaced to provide any plate fasteners necessary to attach the license plate to the vehicle at the manufacturer's suggested retail price.

The bill requires the DOL to offer to owners on the tenth-year registration renewal notice the option of retaining the current license plate number when obtaining replacement license plates.

The bill applies to vehicle registrations that are due or become due on or after January 1, 2014.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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