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**HOUSE BILL 1510**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2021 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Hackney, Fey, Sutherland, Eslick, and Riccelli

AN ACT Relating to establishing an exemption from certain highway use requirements by nonemergency medical transportation vehicles; amending RCW 46.61.165 and 47.52.025; and adding a new section to chapter 46.16A RCW.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 46.16A RCW to read as follows:

(1) A for hire nonemergency medical transportation vehicle is a vehicle that is a "for hire vehicle" under RCW 46.04.190 that provides nonemergency medical transportation, including for life-sustaining transportation purposes, to meet the medical transportation needs of individuals traveling to medical practices and clinics, cancer centers, dialysis facilities, hospitals, and other care providers.

(2) The owner of a for hire nonemergency medical transportation vehicle may apply to the department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the director, for a high occupancy vehicle exempt decal for a for hire nonemergency medical transportation vehicle. The high occupancy vehicle exempt decal allows the for hire nonemergency medical transportation vehicle to use a high occupancy vehicle lane as specified in RCW 46.61.165 and 47.52.025.

(3) For the exemption in this subsection to apply to a for hire nonemergency medical transportation vehicle, the decal:

(a) Must be displayed on the vehicle so that it is clearly visible from outside the vehicle;

(b) Must identify that the vehicle is exempt from the high occupancy vehicle requirements; and

(c) Must be visible from the rear of the vehicle.

(4) The owner of a for hire nonemergency medical transportation vehicle or the owner's representative must apply for a high occupancy vehicle exempt decal on a form provided or approved by the department. The application must include:

(a) The name and address of the person who is the owner of the vehicle;

(b) A full description of the vehicle, including its make, model, year, and the vehicle identification number;

(c) The purpose for which the vehicle is principally used; and

(d) Other information as required by the department upon application.

(5) The department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the director shall collect the fee required under subsection (6) of this section when issuing a high occupancy vehicle exempt decal.

(6) The department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent, is required to collect a $5 fee when issuing a decal under this section, in addition to any other fees and taxes required by law.

(7) A high occupancy vehicle exempt decal may not be renewed. The status as an exempt vehicle continues until suspended or revoked for misuse, or when the vehicle is no longer used as a for hire nonemergency medical transportation vehicle.

(8) The department may adopt rules to implement this section.

**Sec.**  RCW 46.61.165 and 2019 c 467 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The state department of transportation and the local authorities are authorized to reserve all or any portion of any highway under their respective jurisdictions, including any designated lane or ramp, for the exclusive or preferential use of one or more of the following: (a) Public transportation vehicles; (b) motorcycles; (c) private motor vehicles carrying no fewer than a specified number of passengers; ((~~or~~)) (d) for hire nonemergency medical transportation vehicles, when in use for medical purposes, as described in section 1 of this act; or (e) the following private transportation provider vehicles if the vehicle has the capacity to carry eight or more passengers, regardless of the number of passengers in the vehicle, and if such use does not interfere with the efficiency, reliability, and safety of public transportation operations: (i) Auto transportation company vehicles regulated under chapter 81.68 RCW; (ii) passenger charter carrier vehicles regulated under chapter 81.70 RCW, except marked or unmarked stretch limousines and stretch sport utility vehicles as defined under department of licensing rules; (iii) private nonprofit transportation provider vehicles regulated under chapter 81.66 RCW; and (iv) private employer transportation service vehicles, when such limitation will increase the efficient utilization of the highway or will aid in the conservation of energy resources.

(2) Any transit-only lanes that allow other vehicles to access abutting businesses that are authorized pursuant to subsection (1) of this section may not be authorized for the use of private transportation provider vehicles as described under subsection (1) of this section.

(3) The state department of transportation and the local authorities authorized to reserve all or any portion of any highway under their respective jurisdictions, for exclusive or preferential use, may prohibit the use of a high occupancy vehicle lane by the following private transportation provider vehicles: (a) Auto transportation company vehicles regulated under chapter 81.68 RCW; (b) passenger charter carrier vehicles regulated under chapter 81.70 RCW, and marked or unmarked limousines and stretch sport utility vehicles as defined under department of licensing rules; (c) private nonprofit transportation provider vehicles regulated under chapter 81.66 RCW; and (d) private employer transportation service vehicles, when the average transit speed in the high occupancy vehicle lane fails to meet department of transportation standards and falls below forty-five miles per hour at least ninety percent of the time during the peak hours, as determined by the department of transportation or the local authority, whichever operates the facility.

(4) Regulations authorizing such exclusive or preferential use of a highway facility may be declared to be effective at all times or at specified times of day or on specified days. Violation of a restriction of highway usage prescribed by the appropriate authority under this section is a traffic infraction. A person who commits a traffic infraction under this section is also subject to additional monetary penalties as defined in this subsection. The additional monetary penalties are separate from the base penalty, fees, and assessments issued for the traffic infraction and are intended to raise awareness, and improve the efficiency, of the high occupancy vehicle lane system.

(a) Whenever a person commits a traffic infraction under this section, an additional monetary penalty of fifty dollars must be collected, and, in the case that a person has already committed a violation under this section within two years of committing this violation, then an additional one hundred fifty dollars must be collected.

(b) Any time a person commits a traffic infraction under this section and is using a dummy, doll, or other human facsimile to make it appear that an additional person is in the vehicle, the person must be assessed a two hundred dollar penalty, which is in addition to the penalties in (a) of this subsection.

(c) The monetary penalties under (a) and (b) of this subsection are additional, separate, and distinct penalties from the base penalty and are not subject to fees or assessments specified in RCW 46.63.110, 3.62.090, and 2.68.040.

(d)(i) The additional penalties collected under (a) of this subsection must be distributed as follows:

(A) Twenty-five percent must be deposited into the congestion relief and traffic safety account created under RCW 46.68.398; and

(B) Seventy-five percent must be deposited into the motor vehicle fund created under RCW 46.68.070.

(ii) The additional penalty collected under (b) of this subsection must be deposited into the congestion relief and traffic safety account created under RCW 46.68.398.

(e) Violations committed under this section are excluded from eligibility as a moving violation for driver's license suspension under RCW 46.20.289 when a person subsequently fails to respond to a notice of traffic infraction for this moving violation, fails to appear at a requested hearing for this moving violation, violates a written promise to appear in court for a notice of infraction for this moving violation, or fails to comply with the terms of a notice of traffic infraction for this moving violation.

(5) Local authorities are encouraged to establish a process for private transportation providers, as described under subsections (1) and (3) of this section, to apply for the use of public transportation facilities reserved for the exclusive or preferential use of public transportation vehicles. The application and review processes should be uniform and should provide for an expeditious response by the local authority. Whenever practicable, local authorities should enter into agreements with such private transportation providers to allow for the reasonable use of these facilities.

(6) For the purposes of this section, "private employer transportation service" means regularly scheduled, fixed-route transportation service that is similarly marked or identified to display the business name or logo on the driver and passenger sides of the vehicle, meets the annual certification requirements of the department of transportation, and is offered by an employer for the benefit of its employees.

**Sec.**  RCW 47.52.025 and 2013 c 26 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Highway authorities of the state, counties, and incorporated cities and towns, in addition to the specific powers granted in this chapter, shall also have, and may exercise, relative to limited access facilities, any and all additional authority, now or hereafter vested in them relative to highways or streets within their respective jurisdictions, and may regulate, restrict, or prohibit the use of such limited access facilities by various classes of vehicles or traffic. Such highway authorities may reserve any limited access facility or portions thereof, including designated lanes or ramps for the exclusive or preferential use of (a) public transportation vehicles((~~,~~)); (b) privately owned buses((~~,~~)); (c) motorcycles((~~,~~)); (d) for hire nonemergency medical transportation vehicles, as described in section 1 of this act, when in use for medical purposes; (e) private motor vehicles carrying not less than a specified number of passengers((~~,~~)); or ((~~(e)~~)) (f) the following private transportation provider vehicles if the vehicle has the capacity to carry eight or more passengers, regardless of the number of passengers in the vehicle, and if such use does not interfere with the efficiency, reliability, and safety of public transportation operations: (i) Auto transportation company vehicles regulated under chapter 81.68 RCW; (ii) passenger charter carrier vehicles regulated under chapter 81.70 RCW, except marked or unmarked stretch limousines and stretch sport utility vehicles as defined under department of licensing rules; (iii) private nonprofit transportation provider vehicles regulated under chapter 81.66 RCW; and (iv) private employer transportation service vehicles, when such limitation will increase the efficient utilization of the highway facility or will aid in the conservation of energy resources. Regulations authorizing such exclusive or preferential use of a highway facility may be declared to be effective at all time or at specified times of day or on specified days.

(2) Any transit-only lanes that allow other vehicles to access abutting businesses that are reserved pursuant to subsection (1) of this section may not be authorized for the use of private transportation provider vehicles as described under subsection (1) of this section.

(3) Highway authorities of the state, counties, or incorporated cities and towns may prohibit the use of limited access facilities by the following private transportation provider vehicles: (a) Auto transportation company vehicles regulated under chapter 81.68 RCW; (b) passenger charter carrier vehicles regulated under chapter 81.70 RCW, and marked or unmarked limousines and stretch sport utility vehicles as defined under department of licensing rules; (c) private nonprofit transportation provider vehicles regulated under chapter 81.66 RCW; and (d) private employer transportation service vehicles, when the average transit speed in the high occupancy vehicle travel lane fails to meet department standards and falls below forty-five miles per hour at least ninety percent of the time during the peak hours for two consecutive months.

(4)(a) Local authorities are encouraged to establish a process for private transportation providers, described under subsections (1) and (3) of this section, to apply for the use of limited access facilities that are reserved for the exclusive or preferential use of public transportation vehicles.

(b) The process must provide a list of facilities that the local authority determines to be unavailable for use by the private transportation provider and must provide the criteria used to reach that determination.

(c) The application and review processes must be uniform and should provide for an expeditious response by the authority.

(5) For the purposes of this section, "private employer transportation service" means regularly scheduled, fixed-route transportation service that is similarly marked or identified to display the business name or logo on the driver and passenger sides of the vehicle, meets the annual certification requirements of the department, and is offered by an employer for the benefit of its employees.

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