

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5907

As Passed Senate, February 11, 2022

Title: An act relating to roadside safety measures.

Brief Description: Concerning roadside safety measures.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Wilson, J., Lovick, Fortunato, Lovelett, Randall, Saldaña, Stanford and Wilson, L.).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/25/22, 2/07/22 [DPS].

Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 2/11/22, 49-0.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Requires drivers to reduce their speed when approaching an emergency or work zone on a highway having four or more lanes.
- Allows tow trucks and firetrucks to operate rear-facing blue lights for use only at the scene of an emergency or accident.
- Requires the Department of Licensing to develop an appropriate training module relating to the requirement to move over and reduce speed when approaching an emergency or work zone.
- Requires an increase in the use of roadway signage and electronic display sign boards along roadways to reflect the emergency or work zone requirements.
- Requires the development of a statewide public awareness campaign about the slow down and move over law.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5907 be substituted therefor, and the

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substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Lias, Chair; Saldaña, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Member; Cleveland, Das, Fortunato, Hawkins, Holy, Lovelett, Lovick, Nguyen, Nobles, Padden, Randall, Sheldon, Wilson, C. and Wilson, J.

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

Background: An emergency or work zone is defined as the adjacent lanes of the roadway 200 feet before and after:

- a stationary authorized emergency vehicle using audible or visual signals, or both;
- a tow truck using visual red lights;
- other vehicles providing roadside assistance using warning lights with 360 degree visibility;
- a police vehicle properly and lawfully displaying a flashing, blinking, or alternating emergency light or lights; or
- a stationary or slow moving highway construction vehicle, highway maintenance vehicle, solid waste vehicle, or utility service vehicle using flashing lights or warning lights with 360 degree visibility.

Drivers approaching an emergency or work zone must proceed with caution and, if the opportunity exists, with due regard for safety and traffic conditions, yield the right-of-way by making a lane change or moving away from the lane or shoulder occupied by an emergency or work zone vehicle. If approaching the emergency or work zone on a highway having less than four lanes, the driver must also reduce the speed of the vehicle. If changing lanes or moving away would be unsafe, the driver must proceed with due caution and reduce the speed of the vehicle to at least 10 miles per hour below the posted speed limit.

Summary of First Substitute Bill: When approaching an emergency or work zone on a highway having four or more lanes, drivers must reduce the speed of the vehicle in addition to proceeding with caution and moving away from the emergency or work zone vehicle.

Drivers must reduce their speed to 50 miles per hour or less on a highway with a speed limit exceeding 60 miles per hour if unable to move over when approaching an emergency or work zone.

Tow trucks may operate rear-facing blue lights for use only at the scene of an emergency or accident. Tow trucks may use red lights when reentering the roadway from the scene of an emergency or accident for a reasonable distance to reach operating speed from the scene. The combination of red and blue lights may be used only at the scene of an emergency or accident.

Allows firetrucks to operate rear-facing blue lights for use only at the scene of an emergency.

The Department of Licensing (DOL) must develop an appropriate training module, for inclusion in all new driver training curriculums, relating to the requirements that apply when approaching an emergency or work zone.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) must substantially increase the use of roadway signage and electronic display sign boards along roadways to reflect the emergency or work zone requirements.

DOL must provide each driver license applicant with written materials regarding the slow down and move over law and place signage in each licensing service office providing background on the written materials;

DOL and the Washington Traffic Safety Commission must develop a statewide public awareness campaign to inform and educate Washington citizens about the slow down and move over law.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: Drivers are often unaware of the requirements around approaching an emergency or work zone. The law is intended to save lives. This is an education bill to help raise public awareness of the requirements. The bill requires drivers to understand and acknowledge the requirements of the move over law. Other states have media campaigns to educate drivers about the move over law and Washington should too. The bill provides more signage along highways to remind drivers of the move over requirements. Many tow truck operator friends have died from drivers not moving over and hitting tow operators along the highways. Protecting tow truck operators is of utmost importance.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Jeff Wilson, Prime Sponsor; Nathan Ogle, Dick's Towing, Wenatchee; Ron Jake, Bethel Towing, Port Orchard; Peter Lukevich, TRAW; Jennifer Cook, AAA Washington; Jesse Pauley, AAA Washington.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.