

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6659

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 5, 1996

Title: An act relating to use of high-occupancy vehicle lanes.

Brief Description: Regulating use of high-occupancy vehicle lanes.

Sponsors: Senators Schow, Morton, Owen, Oke, Heavey, Prince and Prentice.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/30/96, 2/5/96 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6659 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Owen, Chair; Heavey, Vice Chair; Goings, Morton, Oke, Prentice, Prince, Rasmussen, Schow, Sellar and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Mary McLaughlin (786-7309)

Background: By Department of Transportation (DOT) traffic regulation, the following vehicles are authorized to use the high-occupancy vehicle lanes: (1) municipal transit vehicles and other buses carrying 20 or more passengers, regardless of the number of occupants; (2) motorcycles; and (3) vehicles carrying two or three occupants, depending on the posted signage. Trucks over 10,000 pounds are prohibited from using the HOV lanes by departmental rule.

There is no provision to allow other types of passenger vehicles to use the HOV lanes when the driver is the only occupant.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The current DOT traffic rule that authorizes certain vehicles to use the HOV lanes is made statutory. The rule prohibiting trucks from using the HOV lane, except when preparing to turn left or by DOT rule, is also made statutory.

In addition, the following types of passenger vehicles are authorized to use the HOV lanes, regardless of the number of occupants: (1) for-hire vehicles transporting passengers for compensation -- includes taxis, limousines, shuttle services, airporters, etc.; (2) vehicles transporting passengers without compensation -- courtesy vans, private carrier buses, school buses, private, and nonprofit transportation providers for the elderly and handicapped; and (3) other vehicles determined by departmental rule.

It is illegal for the driver of a for-hire vehicle, a vehicle transporting passengers free of charge, and other vehicles determined by the DOT to travel alone in an HOV lane without a sticker that identifies the vehicle as an authorized HOV. The stickers are issued by the

department, upon payment of a fee, and must be clearly affixed to the vehicle. Operating without a sticker or fraudulent use of a sticker is a traffic infraction and carries a penalty of not less than \$100.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: DOT rulemaking authority is clarified.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Allowing taxis, limousines, shuttles, courtesy vans, etc. to travel alone in the HOV lane is a time-saving mechanism for those operators who transport passengers for a living.

Testimony Against: Allowing these vehicles in the HOV lanes when travelling alone will accelerate the "three plus" timeframe.

Testified: Senator Schow, prime sponsor; Doug Bohlke, Taxi Assn. (pro); Ed Stemkoski, Farwest Taxi (pro); Dave Peach, WSDOT (con); Dan Snow, WA State Transit Assn.; Steve Lindstrom, Community Transit.