SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6440

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 3, 1998

Title: An act relating to studded tires.

Brief Description: Phasing in lightweight tire studs.

Sponsors: Senators Heavey, Prince, Haugen, Horn, Winsley and Jacobsen; by request of Department of Transportation.

Brief History:
Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/22/98, 2/3/98 [DPS, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6440 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prince, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Goings, Haugen, Heavey, Horn, Jacobsen, Oke and Patterson.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Morton and Sellar.

Staff: Jeff Doyle (786-7322)

Background: The state of Washington permits the use of studded tires from November 1 to April 1 of each year. A 1991 study found that 24 states allow the use of studded tires during specified time periods, while Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin prohibit studded tires.

Studies indicate that 14 percent to 35 percent of vehicles in Washington use typical studded tires. Typical studs have a steel body and are heavier than the newer generation studs currently mandated in most of northern Europe. As the tire wears, the stud protrusion increases, exacerbating road wear. Furthermore, the rate of road wear increases when the pavement is wet.

Recent study data indicate that over the course of its 30,000 mile useful life, a studded tire will remove between one-half to three-quarter tons of asphalt concrete mix. The cost of material replacement alone would range from $8 to $15 per tire, depending on material costs. The state of Alaska has estimated that repairing ruts caused by studded tires requires that pavement adjacent to the rutted lane also be extracted, driving the repair costs up to $40 to $50 per studded tire.

In Sweden, it has been long recognized that the conventional studs cause excessive pavement wear. New low-noise, reduced road wear studs have been developed. These studs weigh 15-50 percent less than conventional studs.

The newest generation of lightweight studs are estimated to reduce road wear in the range of 15-50 percent, without any decrease in performance.

The state of Oregon recently passed a law mandating the use of lightweight tire studs.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Lightweight studs, which are at least 15 percent lighter than metal studs most commonly used in the industry, are the only type approved for use in studded snow tires beginning July 1, 2004.

Wholesalers must sell only lightweight studs to tire dealers in Washington beginning January 1, 1999. Tire dealers may continue to sell the heavier metal studs until July 1, 2000.

Wholesalers are allowed to deplete their existing inventory before they are subject to the new stud standards.

The Washington State Patrol equipment standards division may modify, by formal rulemaking, the type of lightweight studs authorized for use on Washington's roadways. The State Patrol must allow a reasonable time to implement any new studded tire equipment standards.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Wholesalers are allowed to deplete their existing inventory before they are subject to the new stud standards.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: This bill will reduce the amount of highway damage by at least $1 million per year. The standards required in this bill are identical to the latest standards adopted in Oregon. Wholesalers will be left with a large inventory of heavy studs that they cannot return to the manufacturer unless the bill is amended to allow wholesalers to deplete their existing inventory.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Senator Heavey, prime sponsor; Bob Gee, NW Tire Dealers Association; Linea Laird, Dave Bowers, WSDOT.