

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5381

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As Passed Senate, March 5, 1999

**Title:** An act relating to motorist information signs.

**Brief Description:** Adding information to motorist information signs.

**Sponsors:** Senators T. Sheldon, Benton, Haugen, Horn, Costa and Winsley; by request of Department of Transportation.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Transportation: 2/3/99, 2/9/99 [DP].  
Passed Senate, 3/5/99, 46-0.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Gardner, Vice Chair; Goings, Vice Chair; Benton, Costa, Eide, Heavey, Horn, Jacobsen, Johnson, Oke, Patterson, Prentice, Sellar, Sheahan, T. Sheldon and Shin.

**Staff:** Ashley Probart (786-7319)

**Background:** State law authorizes the Department of Transportation to erect and maintain signs that provide information to the traveling public. The signs are placed on panels that include motorist service information on gas, food, recreation, or lodging that is off of an interstate, primary or scenic highway.

An information sign assembly consists of a back panel on which business panels are placed. Information panels can have up to six business signs on interchanges and up to four signs at intersections. The Department of Transportation is authorized to seek reimbursement for the businesses signs on these panels. However, the Department of Transportation is not authorized to charge fees for the erection and maintenance of the back panels.

Tourist oriented directional signs (TODs) is another category of informational signs that are only permitted on noninterstate highways. This is consistent with the federal Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. Current state and federal law does not permit TODs on the interstate system. However, a recent Committee on National Uniform Traffic Control Devices authorization of TODs is expected to permit this form of signing nationwide within the next two years.

**Summary of Bill:** State law relating to motorist information signs is clarified. The categories for the designation of motorist information signs is changed from an interstate system, primary system, and scenic byway system to a "noninterstate" and "interstate" system.

The Department of Transportation is authorized to charge fees to defray the costs of installing and maintaining information sign panels. The fee is determined by administrative rule making.

Tourism oriented directional signs are permitted on the interstate system, pending a final Federal Highway Administration decision.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** WSDOT is currently allowed to only charge fees for the business sign, but is not allowed to charge a fee for the back panel portion of motorist information signs. This bill would enable cost recovery for this program. This bill will also make Washington State law consistent with the pending federal highway administration decision to permit tourist oriented directional signs on the interstate.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Senator T. Sheldon, prime sponsor (pro); Lloyd Ensley, DOT (pro).