

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1563

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Ecology

Title: An act relating to motor vehicle emission inspection fee adjustments.

Brief Description: Providing adjustments to motor vehicle emission inspection fees.

Sponsors: Representatives G. Chandler, Linville, Pennington, Cooper and O'Brien; by request of Department of Ecology.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Ecology: 2/6/01, 2/23/01 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Caps the fee charged to a customer for a motor vehicle emissions inspection at \$26 and limits the portion of the inspection fee that is dedicated for reimbursement to the Department of Ecology's administrative costs at \$3.80.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ECOLOGY

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives G. Chandler, Republican Co-Chair; Linville, Democratic Co-Chair; Cooper, Democratic Vice Chair; B. Chandler, Dunshee, Grant, Hunt, Quall and Schoesler.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Delvin, Kirby, Roach and Sump.

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

The Department of Ecology (DOE) states in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) that gasoline powered motor vehicles emit significant quantities of hydrocarbons and oxides of nitrogen, in addition to serving as the primary emitters of carbon monoxide. Federal emissions standards are designed to reduce motor vehicle emissions; however, the

DOE reports that the effectiveness of these efforts are reduced through deterioration, maladjustment, and tampering. In their administrative rules, the DOE states that emission inspections serve to identify high polluting vehicles and vehicles with tampered or missing emission controls. Once the vehicles are identified, the DOE seeks to reduce their emissions if it can be accomplished at a reasonable cost.

The DOE conducts emission inspections on motor vehicles registered in the areas of the state designated by the DOE as "emissions contributing areas." An area of the state may only be identified as an emissions contributing area if the DOE first finds that the area is within a "non-compliance" area for motor vehicle emissions. Currently in the WAC, the DOE has listed the cities of Seattle, Bellevue, Spokane, Tacoma, Vancouver, and Everett as non-compliance areas. Within each non-compliance area, the DOE identifies by zip code the smallest land area containing registered motor vehicles significantly contributing to air quality degradation. Vehicles registered within the identified zip codes that are older than five years or newer than 25 years are subject to emission testing biennially.

The owner of a vehicle registered in an emissions contributing area must pay a fee to have an emission inspection conducted. The amount of that fee is set in rule by the DOE, and must be applicable state-wide or throughout an emissions control area. The fee may not exceed \$15, and surplus money collected is paid to the state general fund. Fees must be calculated to compensate the contracted inspection facility owner and to offset the general fund appropriation made to the DOE to cover the administrative costs of the inspection program.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The fee charged to a customer for a motor vehicle emission inspection is capped at \$26. The portion of the inspection fee that is dedicated for reimbursement to the Department of Ecology for administrative costs is limited to \$3.80 per inspection.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The original bill eliminated the cap on fees that the DOE can charge to customers for vehicle emissions tests. The original bill did not limit the portion of the vehicle emissions test fee that is dedicated to reimbursement to the Department of Ecology for administrative costs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill

is passed.

Testimony For: (Original bill) This is a bill for the DOE that does not increase the DOE's revenue while preventing a return to unhealthy air by allowing the DOE to continue and enhance its emissions inspection program. The inspection program can not continue without a fee increase unless the level of service is drastically cut. The current fee is the lowest of the western states, and any proposed increase by the DOE would still position Washington in the lower tier of western states in terms of inspection fees for vehicle emissions. The fee is determined by the market and competitive bid, and is set at the lowest rate needed to cover contract costs and reimburse administrative costs from the general fund. Currently the fee is not reimbursing expenditures made from the general fund. The current \$15 fee is based on a 1992 contract and may be outdated. Raising the fee gives the best return on air quality for the fewest amount of dollars. Options to raising the inspection fee include raising the amount of repairs that must be done before the emissions requirement is waived, but that will not be as effective in keeping the state within federal limits for auto emissions. Many portions of the state are at great risk of exceeding those federal limits, and lowering emission testing may cause those federal levels to be exceeded.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Mary E. Burg, Department of Ecology; Mike Ryherd, Puget Sound Clean Air Agency; Nick Federici, Washington State Lung Association; Gary Smith, Executive Director of Independent Business Association; Grant Nelson, Association of Washington Business; and Dan Riley, Western States Associates.