

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6265

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 8, 2016

Title: An act relating to vehicle weight limits for the movement of agricultural commodities.

Brief Description: Concerning vehicle weight limits for the movement of agricultural commodities.

Sponsors: Senators King, Warnick, Bailey, Schoesler, Hasegawa, Conway, Takko, Nelson, Padden, Benton, Ericksen, Honeyford, Parlette and Hewitt.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/18/16, 2/08/16 [DPS, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6265 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators King, Chair; Fain, Vice Chair, Budget ; Hobbs, Ranking Minority Member; Ericksen, Litzow, Miloscia, Rivers, Sheldon and Takko.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Liias, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Carlyle, Cleveland and Jayapal.

Staff: Brian Connell (786-7346)

Background: Under current law, no vehicle or combination of vehicles may operate on state public highways with a gross load on any single axle in excess of 20,000 pounds, or upon any group of axles in excess of the amounts identified in statute, with exception for vehicles with two consecutive sets of tandem axles.

Additional exceptions are provided in law.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) may issue special permits under certain conditions for vehicles to exceed the maximum load limits on any public highway for which WSDOT has jurisdiction.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The board of county commissioners of each county may prohibit classes or types of vehicles on any county road or bridge and may limit the weight of vehicles which travel thereon.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): Vehicles carrying an agricultural commodity may exceed the maximum allowable gross weight limitations by 2000 pounds when traveling on public highways in the state that are not part of the federal-aid interstate system but may not exceed posted weight limits on any bridges.

A special permit is not required for vehicles meeting this exemption.

An exception is provided for vehicles carrying an agricultural commodity to exceed gross weight limits established by a board of county commissioners by 2000 pounds when traveling on public highways in the state but may not exceed posted weight limits on any bridges.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): Changes the definition of agricultural commodity from “any plant or part of a plant, or animal, or animal product, produced by a person (including farmers, ranchers, vineyardists, plant propagators, Christmas tree growers, aquaculturists, floriculturists, orchardists, foresters, or other comparable persons) primarily for sale, consumption, propagation, or other use by people or animals” to “crops produced on a farm or ranch during harvest season and transported from the farm or ranch to the processing location.”

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: None.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill allows farmers to efficiently move crops during harvest and is done similarly in some states. The bill allows a margin of error for loads that may vary in weight due to factors such as humidity and harvest method.

OTHER: Local governments may need to re-rate bridges to determine if excess weights can be accommodated. The increase in allowable weights may lead to greater deterioration of surfaces. WSDOT already has a backlog of road and bridge preservation projects and the heavier loads may cause increased preservation costs of roads and bridges. Agricultural vehicles are already afforded some exemptions under federal regulations and state statute allows the Washington State Patrol to consider the totality of situations and grant leniency in regards to overweight vehicles.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Diana Carlen, Washington Association of Wheat Growers; Mike Schwisow, Washington Association of Wine Grape Growers.

OTHER: Gary Rowe, Washington State Association of Counties; David Williams, Association of Washington Cities; Melissa Van Gorkom, Washington State Patrol; Chris Christopher, Washington State Department of Transportation.

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