

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1964

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 23, 1996

Title: An act relating to access to accident reports.

Brief Description: Simplifying accident report record-keeping.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives K. Schmidt, R. Fisher, Robertson, Cairnes, Ogden, Hankins, Elliot, Johnson, Chandler, Scott, Tokuda, Quall, Backlund, Chopp, Horn, Koster, McMahan, Mitchell, Skinner, Benton, D. Schmidt and Stevens).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: : 3/21/95, 4/3/95 [DP, DNP]; 2/14/96, 2/23/96 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

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

Staff: Brad Lovaas (786-7307)

Background: A person who is involved in a motor vehicle accident resulting in death or injury to another, or resulting in damage to property in excess of \$500, is required to file an accident report within 24 hours of the accident. Any person involved in a reportable accident sends a report to the chief of police of the city or town in which the accident occurred, or the county sheriff or Washington State Patrol (WSP) if such accident occurred outside of a city or town.

The police chief or sheriff is required to send the original to the WSP and a copy to the Department of Licensing (DOL).

The transportation budget enacted by the Legislature contains a section which requires the chief information officers and a key business executive from the WSP, DOL and Department of Transportation to meet on a quarterly basis and address areas of mutual concern. The group is referred to as the Information Technology in Transportation Committee.

One of the goals of this committee has been to identify duplicate systems and processes within transportation agencies. The committee has identified the traffic accident reporting process as a joint project that would streamline business, improve the accuracy of the data, and improve the time frame in which the information is available for use to the stakeholders. This project will reduce the time it takes to utilize accident information from seven months to seven days.

The new system will cost \$750,000 to develop and implement, with the costs being shared equally by all three agencies. The project development will occur during Fiscal Year (FY) 96 and be available for implementation on July 1, 1996. In FY 97, nine full-time equivalents (FTEs) will be eliminated from the WSP and five FTEs from the DOL.

Upon payment of \$4.50, a driving record abstract covering the last three years may be obtained from the DOL.

Currently, drivers' abstracts may only be furnished to the following individuals or entities: (1) the individual named in the abstract; (2) an employer; (3) insurance carriers that cover the employer or a prospective employer; (4) insurance carriers that cover the named individual; (5) insurance carriers to which the named individual has applied; (6) alcohol/drug assessment or treatment agencies approved by the Department of Social and Health Services to which the named individual has applied or been assigned for evaluation or treatment; or (7) city or county prosecuting attorneys.

Current law does allow agents, acting on behalf of insurance carriers, to obtain drivers' abstracts. However, agents acting on behalf of employers or prospective employers, such as employment screening agencies, are not permitted to obtain drivers' abstracts.

Summary of Amended Bill: The statutory requirement that a copy of the accident report that is sent to the Department of Licensing (DOL) is deleted. The State Patrol provides all traffic accident reports to the Department of Licensing electronically.

Agents acting on behalf of employers or prospective employers may procure certified abstracts of driving records from the DOL. However, release of driving record abstracts to employers or prospective employers must be necessary to determine whether the licensee should be employed to operate a commercial vehicle or school bus and shall be authorized by the employee or prospective employee via a signed statement.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: Agents acting on behalf of employers or prospective employers may procure certified abstracts of driving records from the DOL. Release of a certified abstract of the driving records of an employee or prospective employee requires a statement signed by: (1) the employee or prospective employee that authorizes the release of the record; and (2) the employer attesting that the information is necessary to determine whether the licensee should be employed to operate a commercial vehicle or school bus. If the employer or prospective employer authorizes an agent to obtain this information on their behalf, this authorization must be noted in the statement.

An obsolete null and void clause linked to the 1995 transportation budget is removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 1996. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the transportation budget.

Testimony For: None.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: No one.