

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1798

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Transportation, March 28, 2005

**Title:** An act relating to motorist information sign panels.

**Brief Description:** Modifying motorist information sign panel regulatory provisions.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Simpson, Skinner, Lovick, Armstrong, B. Sullivan, Schindler, Upthegrove, Murray and Hudgins).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/11/05, 93-0.

**Committee Activity:** Transportation: 3/28/05 [DPA, w/oRec].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Jacobsen, Vice Chair; Poulsen, Vice Chair; Swecker, Ranking Minority Member; Kastama, Mulliken, Oke, Spanel and Weinstein.

**Minority Report:** That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Esser.

**Staff:** Hayley Gamble (786-7452)

**Background:** The motorist information sign panel program allows businesses close to the highway to advertise on signs within the right of way of the highway system. Under current law, the Department of Transportation (DOT) is required to contract with a private contractor to administer the motorist information sign panel program. This requirement was added in the 2002 legislative session. At that time the fee DOT charged to businesses did not cover the costs of operating the program.

In 2003, DOT began to seek proposals from private companies to run the program. The Washington Federation of State Employees presented a legal challenge regarding the appropriateness of the program's privatization, halting the contracting out process.

A proviso included in the 2004 transportation budget directed DOT to administer the motorist information sign program and recover all costs. A cap on charges to participating businesses was also included in the proviso. Motorist information sign panels are comprised of two parts; the underlying panel and the individual business information signs affixed to the underlying panel. Current law directs DOT to recover reasonable costs for installing and maintaining individual business signs located on the sign panels. However, DOT is not required to recover reasonable costs for the installation and maintenance of the underlying panel that the individual business signs are displayed upon.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** Current law that requires DOT to contract out the motorist information sign program is repealed. The motorist information sign panel program may be administered by DOT.

DOT must charge sufficient fees to recover the cost of erecting and maintaining the sign panels and the underlying sign panels that the individual business signs are affixed to. These requirements apply to interstate and non-interstate roads.

DOT must ensure the use of available space on the underlying sign panel is maximized. DOT must submit an electronic report to the legislative transportation committees by December, 2005, detailing the revenues and expenditures of this program.

**Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The original bill was not considered.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

**Testimony For:** None.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Who Testified:** No one.