

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1820

As Reported by House Committee On: Transportation

Title: An act relating to reducing air pollution through the licensing and use of medium-speed electric vehicles.

Brief Description: Reducing air pollution through the licensing and use of medium-speed electric vehicles.

Sponsors: Representatives Dickerson, Hankins, Lovick, B. Sullivan, Simpson, Hasegawa and Moeller.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/14/07, 2/22/07 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Includes medium-speed electric vehicles in the definition of a motor vehicle and legalizes their use on local roads at speeds up to 35 miles per hour.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 23 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Jarrett, Ranking Minority Member; Schindler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Armstrong, Campbell, Dickerson, Eddy, Ericksen, Hailey, Hankins, Hudgins, Lovick, Rodne, Rolfes, Sells, Simpson, Springer, B. Sullivan, Takko, Upthegrove, Wallace and Wood.

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

Neighborhood electric vehicles (NEV) are included in the definition of a motor vehicle. The vehicles are defined as four-wheeled motor vehicles that are self-propelled and electrically powered, can reach a speed between 20 and 25 miles per hour, and conform to federal regulations.

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.

Neighborhood electric vehicles may be operated on a public highway having a speed limit of 35 miles per hour or less if certain conditions are met. The conditions are that the vehicle is licensed and displays plates, the vehicle is insured for liability, the vehicle may not operate on a state highway, and that the vehicle may not cross a highway with a speed limit over 35 miles per hour, unless certain criteria are met.

The NEV operator must have a valid driver's license. The operator of a NEV in violation of the above provisions is guilty of a traffic infraction. Seatbelt and child restraint laws are applicable, and the vehicle must meet federal standards for that type of vehicle.

Local authorities may regulate the operation of these types of vehicles on public highways under their jurisdiction if the regulations are consistent with the motor vehicle code. The local authorities may not permit vehicles on state highways or require additional registration or licensing.

Summary of Bill:

A medium-speed electric vehicle (MEV) is included in the definition of a motor vehicle. The vehicles are defined as four-wheeled motor vehicles that are self-propelled and electrically powered, can reach a speed a between 30 and 35 miles per hour, are equipped with a roll cage or a crush-proof body design, and otherwise meet or exceed the federal regulations for neighborhood electric vehicles.

Medium-speed electric vehicles may be operated on a public highway having a speed limit of 35 miles per hour or less if certain conditions are met. The conditions are that the vehicle is licensed and displays plates, the vehicle is insured for liability, the vehicle may not operate on a state highway, and that the vehicle may not cross a highway with a speed limit over 35 miles per hour, unless certain criteria are met.

The MEV operator must have a valid driver's license. The operator of a MEV in violation of the above provisions is guilty of a traffic infraction. Seatbelt and child restraint laws are applicable, and the vehicle must meet or exceed federal standards for that type of vehicle.

Local authorities may regulate the operations of these types of vehicles on public highways under their jurisdiction if the regulations are consistent with the motor vehicle code. The local authorities may not permit vehicles on state highways or require additional registration or licensing.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect August 1, 2007.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill will make these electric vehicles more popular since it will allow them to travel up to 35 miles per hour, if they have the proper safety equipment. Currently, these vehicles cannot travel with the flow of traffic and are thus more dangerous to drive. These vehicles are real cars with doors, windows, and unibody construction, and people want them for short trips around town. Most trips that people make are within the range of an electric vehicle.

Electric vehicles are three to four times as efficient as gasoline powered cars. There is a net decrease in pollution generated per mile regardless of how the energy is generated.

Since the owners do not pay gas taxes, a per mile charge would be an appropriate way to ensure that the drivers pay for the maintenance of the roads.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Dickerson, prime sponsor; Steven Lough, Seattle Electric Vehicles Association; and Steve Mayeda, MC Electric Vehicles.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.