

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6569

As Reported by House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to public transit vehicle stops at unmarked stop zones.

Brief Description: Permitting public transit vehicle stops at unmarked stop zones under certain circumstances.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Haugen, Swecker, Hatfield and Holmquist).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/28/08, 3/3/08 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)**

- Allows public transit drivers outside of cities and towns to stop their vehicles at any location in order to receive or discharge passengers, so long as it is done in a safe location, with lights flashing, and the speed limit on a state highway is 40 miles per hour or less.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 25 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Flannigan, Vice Chair; Erickson, Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Armstrong, Campbell, Dickerson, Eddy, Herrera, Hudgins, Jarrett, Kristiansen, Loomis, Rodne, Rolfes, Sells, Simpson, Smith, Springer, Takko, Upthegrove, Wallace, Warnick, Williams and Wood.

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

Drivers are generally not allowed to stop or park a vehicle on the roadway outside of incorporated cities or towns. However, exceptions to this rule are specified for: (1) the driver of any vehicle that is disabled such that it is impossible to avoid stopping and temporarily

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leaving the vehicle; (2) the driver of a public transit vehicle who temporarily stops the vehicle in order to receive and discharge passengers at a marked transit vehicle stop zone; and (3) the driver of a solid waste collection company who temporarily stops the vehicle as far to the right as practical in order to collect solid waste or recyclables.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Public transportation service providers, including certain nonprofit organizations, may allow the driver of a transit vehicle to stop upon a roadway in an unincorporated area momentarily to receive or discharge passengers at an unmarked stop zone. However, the driver must: (1) activate four-way flashing lights; (2) stop at a portion of the highway that the driver has determined has an unobstructed view for drivers approaching from behind the transit vehicle; and (3) only stop on a portion of a state highway with a speed limit of 40 miles per hour or less.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:

The requirement that a driver for a transportation service provider stop a transit vehicle as far to the right hand side of the roadway as is practicable is removed.

The requirements that the posted speed limit must be 40 miles per hour or less on a state highway in order for the driver of a transit vehicle to stop at an unmarked location to receive or discharge passengers, and the driver must make the determination as to whether a particular portion of a highway has an adequately unobstructed view are added to the bill.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Drivers are trained to pick-up and drop-off passengers in a safe fashion. Drivers have been picking up and dropping off people, at their discretion, at unmarked stops for many years, and it is important that this be allowed to continue in order to prevent people from needing to make long walks on potentially dangerous stretches of highway to get to the next marked stop.

Rural transit providers cannot afford to build bus stops at every location where a person might wish to be picked up or dropped off. If a particular spot becomes popular enough, the transit provider will build a bus stop.

(With concerns) Federal law makes the holder of a commercial driver's license responsible for everything that occurs in the vehicle, and there is no ability to look at mitigating circumstances. This bill was brought forward because a driver refused to stop at an unsafe location. This bill needs to be modified in order to make sure that the transit operators and the drivers are both safe.

(For questions) The Washington State Patrol tries to take into consideration the needs of transit operators, but it would probably be safer if the transit vehicles stopped either entirely on the road or entirely off the road. Stopping a vehicle part way off the road increases the risk that other drivers will go around the vehicle in such a way as to increase the risk of head-on collisions. The best approach would be the same one utilized by school buses with flashing lights and a ban on passing.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Dave O'Connell, Mason Transit; and Peter Thein, Washington State Transit Association.

(With concerns) Rita DiIenno, Amalgamated Transit Union #1384.

(For questions) Jeff DeVere, Washington State Patrol.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.