

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6576

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 6, 2018

Title: An act relating to the responsibilities of state routes in cities or towns.

Brief Description: Concerning the responsibilities of state routes in cities or towns.

Sponsors: Senators Mullet and Liias.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/05/18, 2/06/18 [DPS].

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Raises from 25,000 to 27,500 the population threshold at which cities and towns must take over maintenance responsibilities of their streets that are part of the state highway system.
- Phases in three additional increases every five years up to a 35,000 population threshold by 2033.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6576 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hobbs, Chair; Saldaña, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Member; Chase, Cleveland, Dhingra, Fortunato, Liias, McCoy, O'Ban, Sheldon, Takko, Wellman and Zeiger.

Staff: Erica Bramlet (786-7321)

Background: Certain city streets are designated as part of the state highway system. Current law provides that in cities or towns with populations of 25,000 or less, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has the following maintenance responsibilities: slope stability, snow removal, traffic control signals, signs, striping, lane marking, and channelization. Regardless of city or town population, WSDOT retains full responsibility for route markers and directional signs, along with all maintenance for limited access facilities.

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.

Once a city or town's population is determined in the annual Office of Financial Management (OFM) process to have exceeded the 25,000 population threshold, the transfer of maintenance responsibilities takes effect three years from the date of determination. During this time cities and towns may plan for additional staffing, budgetary, and equipment requirements.

In 1991, a task force was created to study the maintenance responsibilities of cities and towns and to reexamine the population threshold which had been in place since the 1950s. As a result of the task force's recommendations, the Legislature raised the population threshold in 1993 from 15,000 to 22,500. The Legislature again raised the population threshold in 2007, from 22,500 to 25,000.

As of the 2017 OFM estimates, eight cities or towns have a population between 25,000 and 35,000.

Summary of Bill (First Substitute): The population threshold at which cities and towns have to take over maintenance responsibilities of their streets that are part of the highway system is raised from 25,000 to 27,500. The threshold further increases to 30,000 in 2023; 32,500 in 2028; and 35,000 in 2033.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (First Substitute):

- Changes the population threshold to 27,500 for when cities must take over maintenance responsibilities on state highways, and then phases in three additional increases every five years up to 35,000 people by 2033.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: Cities nearing the existing 25,000 population threshold is causing concern and reluctance to accept more housing development or other land use changes due to lack of resources to take over maintenance responsibilities. Many of the state highways through these cities, especially in east King County, are mostly carrying people from other places, so cities should not have to bear the financial burden. Maple Valley, for example, would see a 20 percent cost increase over their current street maintenance budget if this bill does not pass. The last time the threshold was raised was 2007; meanwhile, there has been extraordinary growth and the definition of small cities has changed. This bill will make a significant difference for small but growing cities.

The easiest way to lower the fiscal note is to start with a threshold increase to 27,500 and gradually phase it in to 35,000. There are no cities currently in the 25,000 to 27,500 range so the immediate fiscal impact would be zero.

OTHER: The bill has financial impacts to the WSDOT maintenance budget, which is already stretched thin. An incremental increase starting at 27,500 would eliminate financial impacts in the near-term.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Mark Mullet, Prime Sponsor; David Baker, Mayor, City of Kenmore; Laura Philpot, City Manager, City of Maple Valley; Linda Olson, City Councilperson, City of Maple Valley.

OTHER: Greg Selstead, Assistant State Maintenance Engineer, WSDOT.

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