
Transportation Committee

HB 1039

Brief Description: Reporting on, updating, and expanding deployment of existing government programs that provide education on bicycle and pedestrian travel.

Sponsors: Representatives McCaslin and Kloba.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to review and update its existing bicycle and pedestrian safety curriculum for middle schoolers by June 30, 2023.
- Requires the OSPI to coordinate with the Washington State Patrol (WSP) to create a bike safety awareness program for students enrolled in grades 3 to 5 and report to the Legislature by November 1, 2023.
- Requires the WSP to report on the activities of its bicycle awareness program to the Legislature by September 1, 2021. During the 2021-23 biennium, the WSP must also coordinate with the OSPI to create a bike safety awareness program for students enrolled in grades 3 to 5.
- Requires the Department of Health to report on the activities of its head injury prevention program to the Legislature by September 1, 2021.
- Allows the Washington State Department of Transportation to award Safe Routes to Schools grants to school districts for presentations to students of the WSP bicycle awareness program.

Hearing Date:

Staff: Beth Redfield (786-7140).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) offers a bike and pedestrian safety education program funded by the Safe Routes to School Program at the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). The goal of the program is to improve safety and encourage more students in grades 6 to 8 to safely walk and bicycle to school. The OSPI provides training materials and bicycles to the funded districts. The program curriculum is dated December 2013.

Distressed areas are defined for purposes of the Rural Washington Loan Fund to include rural counties with a population density of less than 100 persons per square mile; counties with an unemployment rate 20 percent above the state average; counties with a median household income of less than 75 percent of the state median; metropolitan statistical areas with an average level of unemployment exceeding average state unemployment by 20 percent; or an area within a county, with at least 5,000 persons, with 70 percent or more of its households with incomes below 80 percent of the county's median income and an unemployment rate which is at least 40 percent higher than the county's unemployment rate.

The 1991 Legislature directed the Washington State Patrol (WSP) to create a bicycle awareness program for children in grades kindergarten to 6. The WSP was directed to consult with the Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC) and bicycling groups, conduct the program in conjunction with the safety education officer program, and ensure that each safety educator presenting the bicycle awareness program has received specialized training in bicycle safety education and has been trained in effective defensive bicycle riding skills.

The 1990 Legislature created the head injury prevention program in the Department of Health (DOH). The DOH was directed to consult with the WTSC to identify and coordinate public education efforts currently underway within state government and among private groups to prevent traumatic brain injury.

The federal Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005 established the Safe Routes to Schools program (SRTS). The SAFETEA-LU provided funds to state departments of transportation for projects that improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools. Since 2005 the WSDOT has identified projects aimed at increasing the number of children walking and biking to school safely and submitted a prioritized list to the Legislature each biennium. In addition to funding local pedestrian and bike improvements, the SRTS program has also funded the DOH student travel survey and the OSPI's bicycle and pedestrian education and encouragement program.

The Cooper Jones Active Transportation Council is convened by the WTSC and is composed of stakeholders with expertise in the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorists. The purpose of the council is to review and analyze data and programs related to fatalities and serious injuries involving pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorists and to identify improvements to the transportation system which will improve safety for non-motorized users.

Summary of Bill:

By June 30, 2023, the OSPI must review and update its existing bicycle and pedestrian safety curriculum for middle schoolers. This effort must be in coordination with the WSP, local law enforcement, the DOH brain injury prevention program, local school districts, local bicycle clubs, and the Cooper Jones Active Transportation Safety Council convened by the WTSC. The update must include more hazard avoidance skills and address additional distractions associated with the use of modern technology. The update should also include a plan to increase implementation throughout the state as well as to improve opportunities in distressed areas and reduce disparities in communities of color and other marginalized communities. The OSPI must also review curriculum, educational materials, and training tools for posting on its website, including materials created by the United States Department of Transportation.

The OSPI must also coordinate with the WSP to create a bike safety awareness program for students enrolled in grades 3 to 5. The program must be deployed in at least two school districts with a population of no more than 15,000 students and located on either side of the Cascade mountain range. The program must include hazard avoidance skills and address the additional distractions associated with the use of modern technology.

The OSPI must report to the transportation committees of the Legislature on these activities no later than November 1, 2023.

The WSP is required to report on the activities of its bicycle awareness program to the transportation committees of the Legislature by September 1, 2021.

In addition, during the 2021-23 biennium, the WSP must coordinate with the OSPI to create a bike safety awareness program for students enrolled in grades 3 to 5. The program must be deployed in at least two school districts with a population of no more than 15,000 students and located on either side of the Cascade mountain range. The program must include hazard avoidance skills and address the additional distractions associated with the use of modern technology.

The DOH is required to report on the activities of its head injury prevention program to the transportation committees of the Legislature by September 1, 2021.

The WSDOT may award Safe Routes to Schools grants to school districts for presentations to students of the bicycle awareness program presented by an officer of the WSP or local law enforcement agencies.

Generally, references to the WTSC are updated to specifically reference the Cooper Jones Active Transportation Safety Council.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

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