

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESSB 5272

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Concerning speed safety camera systems on state highways.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Liias, King, Kuderer, Nguyen, Nobles, Saldaña and Wilson, C.; by request of Department of Transportation).

Senate Committee on Transportation
House Committee on Transportation

Background: Automated Traffic Safety Cameras. Automated traffic safety cameras may be used to detect various traffic violations, specifically stoplight, railroad crossing, school speed zone violations, or speed violations in certain cities. Revenue generated from such cameras is treated like a parking infraction and remains with the local government.

In 2020, the Legislature authorized a three-year pilot program regarding the use of automated traffic safety cameras to detect certain stopping and restricted lane violations within cities with a population greater than 500,000—currently the city of Seattle. Fifty percent of revenue generated under the pilot must be deposited in the state Cooper Jones Active Transportation Safety Account to be used for bicycle, pedestrian, and non-motorist safety improvement projects administered by the Washington Traffic Safety Commission. The other 50 percent must be used by the city only for improvements to transportation that support equitable access and mobility for persons with disabilities.

In 2022, the Legislature expanded the use of automated traffic safety cameras, specifically:

- to detect speed violations on roadways in school walk areas, in public park speed zones, and hospital speed zones, with appropriate signage at each location;
- to allow cities to operate at least one automated traffic safety camera to detect speed violations for every 10,000 residents within the city, subject to certain location requirements and completion of an equity analysis to identify appropriate camera locations;
- to extend the three-year pilot program another two years on the use of such cameras

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.

to detect certain stopping and restricted lane violations within cities with a population greater than 500,000.

Fifty percent of revenue generated under these expanded uses must be deposited in the Cooper Jones Active Transportation Safety Account.

Other Automated Camera Systems. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) uses a photo toll system that reads a vehicle license plate on several toll facilities within the state. Vehicle owners are automatically assessed a toll for using any of the toll facilities.

School districts may install and operate automated school bus safety cameras on school buses to detect violations relating to overtaking or meeting a school bus from either direction while the bus is stopped to receive or discharge school children.

Enforcement. Law enforcement officers have the authority to issue a notice of infraction detected through the use of an automated traffic safety camera or an automated school bus safety camera.

Summary: WSDOT is responsible for all actions related to the operation and administration of speed safety camera systems in state highway work zones including, but not limited to, the procurement and administration of contracts necessary for the implementation of speed safety camera systems and the mailing of notices of infraction for speed violations. By July 1, 2024, WSDOT, in consultation with the Washington State Patrol (WSP), the Department of Licensing (DOL), the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH), the Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC), and civil rights organizations, must adopt rules addressing such actions.

WSP is responsible for all actions related to enforcement and adjudication of speed violations captured by speed safety camera systems in state highway work zones including, but not limited to, notice of infraction verification and issuance authorization, and determining which types of emergency vehicles are exempt from being issued notices of infraction for speed violations. By July 1, 2024, WSP, in consultation with WSDOT, DOL, OAH, WTSC, and civil rights organizations, must adopt rules addressing such actions.

WSDOT and WSP may consult other public and private agencies with an interest in such use of speed safety camera systems when establishing such rules. Definitions for speed safety camera system and state highway work zone are provided.

Notices of infraction may only be issued if a speed safety camera system captures a speed violation in a state highway work zone when workers are present. Notices of infraction may be mailed to the registered owner of the vehicle within 30 days of the violation, or to the renter of a vehicle within 30 days of establishing the renter's name and address. The issuing law enforcement officer must include a certificate with the notice, based upon any

electronic images produced to support the notice, which represents prima facie evidence of facts contained in the certificate and is admissible in a proceeding relating to the violation. A person in receipt of such a notice of infraction may, within 30 days of receiving the notice, pay the penalty amount assessed for the violation. If the person fails to pay the penalty amount within 30 days or wishes to dispute the violation, it must be referred to OAH for adjudication. Such violations are not part of the registered owner's driving record.

Speed safety camera systems in state highway work zones may only take electronic images of the vehicle and license plate and while a speed violation is occurring, and must not reveal the face of the driver or passengers in the vehicle. Camera systems should be installed in a manner that minimizes the impact of camera flash on drivers. All electronic images or other personally identifying data are for the exclusive use of WSP and WSDOT in the discharge of their duties and are not open to the public and may only be used in court or administrative appeal proceedings relating to a violation.

Speed safety camera system locations must be clearly marked before camera activation by placing signs in locations that clearly indicate to drivers they are entering a state highway work zone with posted speed limits being monitored by speed safety camera systems. Radar speed feedback signs will be placed in advance of speed safety camera systems, where feasible and constructive, to advise drivers of posted speed limits. Such signs must follow specifications and guidelines under the manual of uniform traffic control devices for streets and highways.

WSP must provide a written notice to a rental car business before a notice of infraction is issued if the business is the registered owner of the vehicle. A notice of infraction may be issued to the rental car business if it does not provide to the issuing agency, within 30 days of receiving the written notice:

- a statement under oath containing the name and known mailing address of the renter when the infraction occurred;
- a statement under oath that the vehicle was stolen at the time of infraction, with a copy of a filed police report; or
- payment of the penalty.

Such installation, operation, enforcement, and adjudication requirements relating to speed safety camera system use in state highway work zones are in effect beginning July 1, 2024.

Any revenue generated from the use of speed safety camera systems must be deposited into the highway safety fund and first used for operating and administrative costs relating to speed safety camera system use. Any revenue generated in excess of operating and administrative costs must be distributed for the purpose of traffic safety, including driver training education and local DUI emphasis patrols.

WSP and WSDOT, in collaboration with WTSC, must report to the transportation committees of the Legislature biennially on the data and efficacy of speed safety camera

system use in state highway work zones, with a recommendation on whether to continue such use as required in the final biennial report due July 1, 2029.

The use of speed safety camera systems in state highway work zones expires June 30, 2030.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate 47 2

House 96 0 (House amended)

Senate 49 0 (Senate concurred)

Effective: July 23, 2023