

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2643

---

*As Reported By House Committee on:  
Transportation*

**Title:** An act relating to vehicle licensing and registration activities.

**Brief Description:** Restructuring reimbursement of vehicle licensing and registration activities.

**Sponsor(s):** Representatives Cooper and R. Fisher.

**Brief History:**

Reported by House Committee on:  
Transportation, February 6, 1992, DPS.

---

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
TRANSPORTATION**

**Majority Report:** *The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass.* Signed by 27 members: Representatives R. Fisher, Chair; R. Meyers, Vice Chair; Betrozoff, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Basich; Brough; Cantwell; Cooper; Day; G. Fisher; Forner; Haugen; Heavey; Horn; P. Johnson; R. Johnson; Jones; Kremen; Mitchell; Nelson; Orr; Prentice; Prince; Schmidt; Wilson; Wood; and Zellinsky.

**Staff:** Brad Lovaas (786-7307).

**Background:** During past legislative sessions, there have been many proposals for increasing agent and subagent motor vehicle licensing filing and service fees. During the 1991 session, the Legislature enacted a new fee structure for motor vehicle subagents. This fee increase will expire on June 30, 1992 without legislative action.

In the 1991 transportation budget, the Legislative Transportation Committee (LTC) was mandated to study the fee structures associated with motor vehicle licensing. The issues that were studied included: 1) the aligning of fees with the cost of transactions; 2) how to make whole small counties that lose money by providing motor vehicle licensing service; and 3) what should counties do with surplus revenue generated by filing fees enacted by the Legislature. In addition, this interim study tried to resolve two questions remaining unanswered by the 1991

Department of Licensing (DOL) study. The 1991 study, which was mandated by the Legislature and later adopted by the LTC, did not resolve how to allocate current or future costs of the County Auditor Automation Program (CAAP) system.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** The expiration date of June 30, 1992, on the subagent fee increase granted during the 1991 legislative session is removed. The previous service fee of \$2.00 is changed. The fee to be charged by subagents for a title transaction with or without a registration renewal is set at \$5.50. A transaction fee for preparation and verification of titles is established at \$5.50. A fee of \$2.25 is established for registration renewal, for transit permits, or for any other service by a subagent.

The appointment process of subagents is brought into statute.

Standard contracts are to be used in the relationships between the DOL and a county and a county and a subagent.

The minimum contract terms are defined. Contracts will describe service expectations, equipment responsibilities, insurance or bond requirements, training and procedures for termination of the contract.

The director of the Department of Licensing is given authority to require or waive any provision necessary to ensure acceptable service, full collection of motor vehicle tax revenues, and to ensure that service is provided to all citizens.

Agents/county auditors service fees are created and their total transaction filing/service fees for the same transaction are raised to the same level as subagents. Mail-in renewals to county auditors are not subject to the service fee of \$2.25.

The service fee to be charged by county auditors is to be remitted to the department for deposit into a new Department of Licensing Services Account in the Motor Vehicle Fund. Monies deposited into this account must be appropriated and used only for information and service systems for the department.

The department shall develop procedures to allow small counties that lose money from providing motor vehicle licensing to retain all or portions of the new service fee. Any county revenue that exceeds the cost of providing motor vehicle licensing shall be used only for transportation purposes as defined in current statute and is expanded to

include motor vehicle licensing and county sheriff activities.

The department is to define and standardize allowable costs that may be charged to vehicle licensing activities by the counties.

A statutory advisory committee is enacted. The Title and Registration Advisory Committee is to foster communication between the county auditors, subagents, DOL and the Legislature. The committee will make recommendations about revisions to the fee structure and cost sharing.

The advisory committee is to be comprised of three people from DOL, two county auditors, two subagents and two members each from the Senate and House Transportation committees. The director of DOL is to serve as chair.

***Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:*** The substitute contains the same provisions as the original except:

The county subagent appointment process is subjected to the normal county procurement process in state statute.

Standard contract terms are clarified. The agent service fee for title work is deleted.

The role of the Statutory Title and Registration Advisory Committee is broadened to include the development of the standard contracts and is to make recommendations to the LTC by January 1, 1996 on fee revisions.

The reimbursement method for small counties is revised. The new agent service fee is deposited into the newly created licensing services account, and the small counties will apply to the Department of Licensing for reimbursement.

***Fiscal Note:*** Available.

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

***Testimony For:*** The subagent fee increase enacted during the 1991 session will be extended. More organization and accountability will be brought to the vehicle licensing system.

A method of funding current and future automated licensing systems will be provided.

**Testimony Against:** The small county revenue problem will not be solved. The balance of members on the Title and Registration Advisory Committee needs to be changed.

**Witnesses:** Jim Buck, Washington State Association of County Auditors (con); Karen Flynn, Washington State Association of County Auditors (con); Fred Saeger, Washington Association of County Officials (con); Dena McCallum, Washington Association of Vehicle Subagents (pro); Betti Sheldon, Bremerton Area Chamber of Commerce (pro); and John Swannack, Department of Licensing (pro).