

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1172

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, APRIL 5, 1991

Brief Description: Creating the school pathway and bus stop improvement program.

SPONSORS: House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Holland, Cole, Peery, Brumsickle, G. Fisher, Valle, Brough, Phillips, Rasmussen, Jones, Dorn, P. Johnson, Jacobsen, Winsley, R. King, Pruitt, H. Myers, Ogden, Wood, Vance, Sheldon, Day, Spanel, Leonard, Paris, Rust, Scott, Haugen, Mitchell, Hine, Cantwell, Wynne, Nealey, Miller, Bowman, Moyer, Fraser, O'Brien, Sprenkle, Orr and Tate; by request of Task Force on Student Transp. Safety).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Bailey, Chairman; Erwin, Vice Chairman; Metcalf, Murray, Pelz, Rinehart, A. Smith, and Talmadge.

Staff: Susan Mosborg (786-7439)

Hearing Dates: April 1, 1991; April 5, 1991

BACKGROUND:

The Task Force on Student Transportation Safety was established in 1989 (ESHB 2066) to develop recommendations for reducing the dangers children face as they travel to and from school. The task force's recommendations included the establishment of a school pathway and bus stop improvement program.

Many children in the state must walk to school on busy streets without sidewalks or adequate shoulders. In addition, children riding school buses are often loaded and unloaded in hazardous locations. These risks are especially high in regions of the state experiencing rapid residential growth. Local jurisdictions have programs to fund sidewalks, paths and trails, but the task force found these programs to be inadequate to meet identified needs.

SUMMARY:

A school pathway and bus stop improvement program and council are established. The council shall: (1) formulate criteria for identifying minimum acceptable walkways, bikeways, and school bus stops, and establish minimum design standards for their improvement; (2) conduct an inventory of school bus stops, and walkways and bikeways within two miles of elementary schools that do not meet the minimum design standards; (3) identify and prioritize improvement projects; (4) assign responsibility and develop a funding plan for them; and (5) estimate the cost of implementing statewide rules for sidewalk crossings.

The council shall include two members of the Senate, two members of the House, and representatives of the Department of Transportation, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, school district administrators, school board members, counties, cities, the Traffic Safety Commission, and parents. The Washington Traffic Safety Commission shall provide staffing.

The council shall submit recommendations to the Legislature, Governor, and other relevant organizations by June 30, 1992. Thereafter the council shall oversee implementation of the recommendations. Authority for the council expires June 30, 1996.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED SENATE AMENDMENT:

The School Pathway and Bus Stop Improvement Council is advisory only and local jurisdictions are not obligated to correct the hazardous conditions identified by the council. The revised language prevents the bill from increasing the liability of local jurisdictions for any accidents that might occur at sites identified by the council as "inadequate."

A representative of school bus drivers is added to the council.

The council's report is due June 30, 1993, rather than June 30, 1992.

The council shall inventory and make recommendations regarding conditions within a one-mile, rather than two-mile, radius of elementary schools.

The bill is null and void if not funded in the 1991-93 biennial budget.

TESTIMONY FOR:

The inventory approach has successfully led to legislative funding in other areas.

There are a lot of traffic situations dangerous to students in the state. School bus drivers witness many close encounters. The bill is an important step to ensure student safety.

It will be difficult to complete the inventory without adequate funding and within one year. Therefore, amendments are suggested to add a null and void clause and to extend the reporting deadline from 1992 to 1993.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: PRO: Representative Bruce Holland; Ruthie Winterholler, Lynn McKinnon, Public School Employees; Charles Hayes, Washington Traffic Safety Commission; Vern Wagar, County Roads Administration Board