

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**ESHB 2272**

**AS OF FEBRUARY 25, 1992**

**Brief Description:** Establishing procedures for charging and reporting high-occupancy vehicle lane violations.

**SPONSORS:** House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives R. Fisher, R. Meyers, Betrozoff, Wang, Winsley and May; by request of Washington State Patrol)

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION**

**Staff:** Mary McLaughlin (786-7309)

**Hearing Dates:** February 27, 1992

**BACKGROUND:**

Under current law a person who violates a high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane restriction must be physically stopped by a law enforcement officer and issued a traffic infraction. Because most violations occur during peak driving hours, pulling a vehicle over to the shoulder can be unsafe and creates further traffic congestion. In areas where the HOV shoulder widths are narrower than normal, the officer must follow the offender off the freeway before issuing a ticket. This procedure is time consuming and minimizes enforcement efforts.

One alternative is to handle HOV violations in a manner similar to parking tickets, i.e., the person is cited for the violation without actually being contacted by a law enforcement officer at the time of the infraction. Parking infractions are not included in the driver's abstract available to an insurance company.

Currently, the fine for an HOV violation is \$47.50 (\$25 base penalty plus 90 percent assessment of \$22.50), regardless of the number of violations. In some states the fine is graduated and a higher penalty is imposed as a deterrent. For example, in the state of California the fine ranges from a maximum of \$300 for a first offense to \$650 for the third offense.

**SUMMARY:**

A rebuttable presumption is made that the registered owner of the vehicle described in the complaint is the person who was driving the vehicle at the time of the HOV violation. The law enforcement officer issuing the citation must have a plain

view of the interior of the vehicle from a distance not farther than the adjoining lane.

A graduated fine structure for violation of the occupancy requirements or for impeding traffic in an HOV lane is established ranging from \$47.50 for a first offense to \$475 for the third offense within five years. Citations may not be issued for violations that occur within one-half mile of a freeway entrance or exit. HOV infractions (1) are not included in the driver's abstract available to an insurance company, and (2) may not be "counted as points" in defining a habitual offender.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** none requested