

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5562

AS PASSED SENATE, MARCH 12, 1991

Brief Description: Requiring at least two passengers in private vehicles using reserved lanes.

SPONSORS: Senators Erwin, Vognild, Thorsness, Nelson and Johnson.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Patterson, Chairman; Barr, Conner, Erwin, Madsen, McMullen, Oke, Sellar, and Vognild.

Staff: David Williams (786-7305)

Hearing Dates: February 26, 1991

BACKGROUND:

As defined by federal regulation, a high occupancy vehicle (HOV) is a bus or other motorized passenger vehicle, such as a carpool or vanpool, used for ridesharing purposes by a specified number of persons. This number is to be determined at the discretion of states in consultation with the United States Department of Transportation.

The 1984 Legislature gave the Department of Transportation (DOT) the authority to reserve all or a portion of a highway for high occupancy vehicle use, and the authority to designate the number of occupants that establishes a high occupancy vehicle. Since the granting of this authority the DOT has designated approximately 45 lane miles of HOV lanes. Use of HOV lanes along Interstate 5 requires three or more persons in a vehicle, and those along Interstate 405 require two or more persons in a vehicle. Critics have argued that there is a need to standardize the designation of high occupancy vehicles and increase the utilization of HOV lanes.

Currently the DOT is developing a formal process to determine the number of occupants required to constitute HOV on various sections of highway. The HOV definition would be established through an operational study to maximize the person-carrying capabilities while providing a time savings incentive for those choosing to rideshare.

SUMMARY:

The Department of Transportation (DOT) is prohibited from requiring that vehicles have more than two persons in order to use the high occupancy vehicle lanes.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested

TESTIMONY FOR: None

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

Critics suggested that the bill would: (1) encourage a level of use which could exceed the capacity of HOV lanes, and (2) cause vehicles traveling in the HOV lane to slow down to a rate which discourages car and van pooling.

TESTIFIED: CON: Chris Leman, Transportation Alternatives Forum;
David Peach, WSDOT; Bill MacCully, Community Transit