

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## ESB 5450

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Transportation

**Title:** An act relating to providing incentives to reduce air pollution through the licensing and use of neighborhood electric vehicles.

**Brief Description:** Providing incentives to reduce air pollution through the use of neighborhood electric vehicles.

**Sponsors:** Senators Horn, Jacobsen, Finkbeiner, Eide, Swecker, Reardon, Regala, Fairley, Kline, Fraser, Haugen, Keiser and Kohl-Welles.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Transportation: 3/31/03, 4/3/03 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill**  
**(As Amended by House Committee)**

- Includes Neighborhood Electric Vehicles in definition of a motor vehicle and legalizes their use on local roads having speed limits of 35 miles per hour or less.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 28 members: Representatives Murray, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Simpson, Vice Chair; Ericksen, Ranking Minority Member; Jarrett, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Armstrong, Bailey, Campbell, Clibborn, Cooper, Dickerson, Edwards, Flannigan, Hankins, Hatfield, Hudgins, Kristiansen, Lovick, Mielke, Morris, Nixon, Romero, Schindler, Shabro, Sullivan, Wood and Woods.

**Staff:** Gene Baxstrom (786-7303).

**Background:**

Neighborhood Electric Vehicles (NEV) are four-wheeled electric vehicles that can reach a maximum speed of 25 miles per hour. They are used in many states primarily for

traveling within communities. They are not permitted on public highways (public roads) in Washington. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has developed equipment standards for low-speed vehicles.

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**Summary of Amended Bill:**

NEVs are included in the definition of a motor vehicle. The vehicles are defined as four-wheeled motor vehicles that are self-propelled and electrically powered, can reach a speed between 20 and 25 miles per hour and conform to federal regulations.

NEVs may be operated on a public highway having a speed limit of 35 miles per hour or less if certain conditions are met. The conditions are that the vehicle is licensed and displays plates, the vehicle is insured for liability, the vehicle may not operate on a state highway, and that the vehicle may not cross a highway with a speed limit over 35 miles per hour, unless certain criteria are met. The vehicle operator must have a valid driver's license.

The operator of a NEV is in violation of the above provisions is guilty of a traffic infraction. Seatbelt and child restraint laws are applicable. The vehicle is exempt from state vehicle equipment standards but must meet federal standards for that type of vehicle.

Local authorities may regulate the operations of these types of vehicles on public highways under their jurisdiction if the regulations are consistent with the motor vehicle code. The local authorities may not permit vehicles on state highways or require additional registration or licensing and they may not prohibit vehicles on local streets having a speed limit of 25 miles per hour or less.

**Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

Local governments are permitted to regulate the operation of the NEVs on local streets having a speed limit of 25 miles per hour or less. The vehicle is exempted from state vehicle equipment standards.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Amended Bill:** The bill takes effect August 1, 2003.

**Testimony For:** These vehicles provide a clean alternative for urban mobility. They are very economical and provide an excellent means for mobility in many retirement

communities and other areas of the state.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Senator Horn, prime sponsor; Linda Graham, Puget Sound Clean Cities Coalition; Tom True; Graeme Sackrison, Mayor City of Lacey; and Alastair Dodwell.