
Transportation Committee

ESB 5450

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 Summary of Engrossed Bill

- 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.

Hearing Date: 3/31/03

Staff: Gene Baxstrom (786-7303).

Background:

Neighborhood electric vehicles 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.

Summary of Bill:

Neighborhood electric vehicles 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.

Neighborhood electric vehicles 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 neighborhood electric vehicle is in violation of the above provisions is guilty of a traffic infraction. Seatbelt and child restraint laws are applicable.

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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.