

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1217

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As of February 17, 2012

**Title:** An act relating to local authorities altering maximum speed limits.

**Brief Description:** Authorizing certain local authorities to establish maximum speed limits on certain nonarterial highways.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Ryu, Pedersen, Johnson, Klippert, Maxwell, Finn, Kenney, Santos, Springer, Ladenburg, Appleton, Liias, McCoy, Miloscia, Fitzgibbon, Kagi, Roberts and Billig).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/07/11, 92-0; 1/30/12, 96-0.

**Committee Activity:** Transportation: 3/14/11, 2/16/12.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Staff:** Kim Johnson (786-7472)

**Background:** State law sets the maximum speed limit at 25 miles per hour on city and town streets, 50 miles per hour on county roads, and 60 miles per hour on state highways. Local authorities may increase the maximum speed limit to 60 miles per hour or decrease the maximum speed limit to 20 miles per hour on a particular roadway on the basis of engineering and traffic investigations, but the alteration of a speed limit on a state highway must be approved by the Secretary of Transportation. Any altered speed limit goes into effect upon the erection of appropriate signs giving notice of the new maximum speed limit.

In practice, speed limits are generally set to reflect the speed at which most motorists naturally drive, which is usually done by determining the speed that 85 percent of the vehicles on a roadway are traveling at or below. When setting speed limits, traffic engineers may also consider other relevant factors including:

- roadway characteristics such as shoulder condition, grade, alignment, and sight distance;
- roadside development and lighting;
- parking practices such as angled parking;
- pedestrian and bicycle activity;
- collision rates and traffic volume trends; and
- potential conflicts with vehicles entering the roadway.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Summary of Bill:** Cities and towns may establish maximum speed limits of 20 miles per hour on nonarterial highways in business or residence districts without an engineering and traffic investigation. However, prior to establishing maximum speed limits of 20 miles per hour, cities and towns must develop procedures regarding the establishment of such speed limits. Cities and towns must also consult the manual on uniform traffic control devices when establishing such speed limits.

Maximum speed limits established without an engineering and traffic investigation may be cancelled within one year of establishment, and the previous maximum speed limit reestablished without an engineering and traffic investigation.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: This bill will save lives and reduce costs to cities. The traffic analysis required under current law is too expensive and burdensome to apply to every neighborhood street. It is permissible and just gives cities and towns the authority to create safer neighborhoods. We have many neighborhoods clamoring for traffic calming options to make their streets safer for children. If we use the 20 mph limit authorized under this bill judiciously, it can be a great benefit to neighborhoods where other traffic calming measures are not appropriate. We have had over 27 non-motorized fatalities in the city of Spokane. We need more tools in our tool box. No one is going to implement a 20 mph zone throughout a whole city. We are looking to our citizens to tell us where they need a slower speed limit. This bill is not about the major arterial streets you travel on, this is about neighborhood streets. This is critical. This is not a speed-trap bill.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Ryu, prime sponsor; Jon Snyder, City of Spokane; Douglas MacDonald, citizen; Sally Clark, city of Seattle; Barbara Culp, Bicycle Alliance of Washington.