

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1045

As Reported by House Committee On: Transportation

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: Representatives Ryu, Angel, Moscoso, Clibborn, Upthegrove, Fitzgibbon, Liias, Pedersen, Stanford, Farrell, Morrell, Pollet, Bergquist and Fey.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/22/13, 1/24/13 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Waives the requirement of an engineering and traffic investigation when a city or town establishes a lower speed limit within a residential or business district.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 24 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Fey, Vice Chair; Liias, Vice Chair; Moscoso, Vice Chair; Orcutt, Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Angel, Bergquist, Farrell, Fitzgibbon, Freeman, Habib, Hayes, Klippert, Kretz, Moeller, O'Ban, Riccelli, Ryu, Sells, Takko, Tarleton, Upthegrove and Zeiger.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Overstreet, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Johnson, Kochmar, Kristiansen and Shea.

Staff: Andrew Russell (786-7143).

Background:

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.

State law establishes speed limits on all roads in the state. These limits depend upon the type of road being limited—city streets, county roads, or state highways. On city streets, the limit is set at 25 miles per hour. On county roads, the limit is set at 50 miles per hour. Finally, on state highways, the limit is set at 60 miles per hour.

Cities or towns may either increase or decrease these limits on their own accord; however, a city or town must undertake an engineering and traffic investigation before making such a change. Generally, this investigation will consider factors such as the speed of the 85th percentile of drivers on the road, road characteristics, parking practices, pedestrian activity, roadside development and environment, a history of crashes, and other factors.

An altered speed limit is effective when the appropriate signs are erected; however, any alteration on a state highway must be approved by the Secretary of the Department of Transportation before going into effect.

Summary of Bill:

A city or town is not required to conduct an engineering and traffic investigation if the city or town reduces the speed limit on a nonarterial highway within a residence or business district to 20 miles per hour. This waiver applies, however, only if the city or town has developed procedures for establishing such lower speed limits. The requirement is also waived if the city or town seeks to cancel a lower speed limit that had been established through the previously described process. In that case, the cancellation must occur within one year of the initial establishment of the 20-mile-per-hour limit. Finally, cities and towns must consult the manual on uniform traffic control devices when establishing speed limits pursuant to the procedures described above.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill gives more local control, offers an additional safety tool, and removes study costs and red tape. Lowered speeds on nonarterial streets can save lives. A pedestrian's chance of being killed sharply increases as the speed of a car striking the pedestrian increases. This is a safety tool in the local government's tool box. The bill provides safe neighborhood streets for all residents, especially children and the elderly. This bill is supported by a number of cities, towns, and local organizations. The bill improves pedestrian safety and helps people age safely. Older pedestrians are more likely to be seriously or fatally injured at lower vehicle speeds than younger people. Pedestrian safety

measures benefit all people, young and old. Pedestrians age 65 and older make up a disproportionate number of victims of fatal pedestrian accidents. Safe, walkable streets are important for safety and lifestyle reasons and particularly for older citizens.

This bill is part of a bigger solution to safety and health issues. Not enough children have access to parks and sidewalks, and not enough children spend sufficient time exercising. This bill is part of the obesity-prevention tool box.

This bill would involve a small decrease in speeds, but it would have a significant impact on safety.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Ryu, prime sponsor; Peggy Quan, AARP; Vic Colman, Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition; and Barb Chamberlain, Bicycle Alliance of Washington.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.