

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 5438

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**As Passed House:**  
April 8, 2015

**Title:** An act relating to allowing bicycles and mopeds to stop and proceed through traffic control signals under certain conditions.

**Brief Description:** Allowing bicycles and mopeds to stop and proceed through traffic control signals under certain conditions.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators King, Hobbs, Dammeier, Rolfes, Hill, Rivers, Liias, Mullet, Billig and Pedersen).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Transportation: 3/16/15, 3/19/15 [DP].

**Floor Activity:**

Passed House: 4/8/15, 78-19.

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Allows operators of bicycles and mopeds to stop and proceed through traffic control signals that use vehicle detection devices under certain conditions, if such devices are inoperable due to the size or composition of the bicycle or moped.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Farrell, Vice Chair; Fey, Vice Chair; Moscoso, Vice Chair; Orcutt, Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Gregerson, Harmsworth, Kochmar, McBride, Pike, Riccelli, Rodne, Sells, Shea, Takko, Wilson, Young and Zeiger.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Hayes and Morris.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Ortiz-Self.

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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.*

**Staff:** Andrew Russell (786-7143).

**Background:**

Generally, all vehicle operators must obey traffic control devices, including traffic signals at intersections. Some of these traffic signals are equipped with sensors that determine when a vehicle approaches the intersection. Once detected by the sensor, the traffic signal will initiate a change in, or extension of, a traffic signal phase; for instance, a change from a red light to a green light.

When a motorcyclist approaches an intersection, including a left-turn intersection, controlled by a triggered traffic control signal using a vehicle detection device, and that signal is inoperative due to the size of the motorcycle, the motorcyclist must come to a complete stop. If the signal fails to operate after one cycle, the motorcyclist may proceed through the intersection or turn left after exercising due care.

It is not a defense to a traffic citation for failure to obey a traffic control signal when a motorcyclist proceeds under the belief that a traffic control signal used a vehicle detection device, when it did not; or that a traffic control signal was inoperative due to the size of the motorcycle, when the device was, in fact, operative.

**Summary of Bill:**

The operators of mopeds, bicycles, and electric-assisted bicycles are authorized to stop and proceed through a traffic control signal under the same requirements and restrictions as motorcycles. Additionally, the composition of a bicycle, moped, and motorcycle is added to potential reasons why a vehicle detection device may be inoperable.

**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) A bill was passed last year to allow motorcyclists to proceed through a traffic light, due to the fact that the motorcycle did not trigger the traffic light. This bill would provide the same opportunity, with the same conditions, for mopeds and bicycles.

This provides a simple, common sense, and reasonable procedure for bicycles to get through red lights. In 2009 legislation was passed to make all traffic control signals be updated to detect bicycles, but some older signals still fail to detect them. This bill builds on past legislation by adding bicycles and mopeds to the law the Legislature passed last year. Adding bicycles provides benefits, including promoting safety, and providing a uniform law for two-wheeled vehicles.

(With concerns) Bicyclists are not required to wear helmets, and bicycles don't have the same size or power that other vehicles do. There is a difference between a motorcycle traveling through an inoperable signal and a bicycle doing the same. In some cases, a hazardous situation could arise.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Senator King, prime sponsor; and Blake Trask, Washington Bikes.

(With concerns) Rob Huss, Washington State Patrol; and Doug Levy, Cities of Puyallup, Everett, and Lake Stevens.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.