

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 2501

As Passed House:
February 18, 2020

Title: An act relating to allowable uses for the multiuse roadway safety account.

Brief Description: Concerning allowable uses for the multiuse roadway safety account.

Sponsors: Representatives Eslick, Blake, Barkis, Ybarra and Shea.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/30/20, 2/5/20 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/18/20, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Expands the eligible purposes for which grants from the Multiuse Roadway Safety Account may be made to include grants to counties to perform maintenance or enhancements on segments of roads, in which the segments are authorized to be used by wheeled all-terrain vehicles (WATV) as part of a travel or tourism route, and grants for the purpose of educational brochures or mapping technology that aids WATV route users.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 28 members: Representatives Fey, Chair; Wylie, 1st Vice Chair; Slatter, 2nd Vice Chair; Valdez, 2nd Vice Chair; Barkis, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Young, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Boehnke, Chambers, Chapman, Doglio, Duerr, Entenman, Eslick, Goehner, Gregerson, Irwin, Kloba, Lovick, McCaslin, Mead, Ortiz-Self, Paul, Ramos, Riccelli, Shewmake, Van Werven and Volz.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Dent, Dufault and Orcutt.

Staff: Mark Matteson (786-7145).

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.

Background:

A wheeled all-terrain vehicle (WATV) is a specific category of off-road vehicle (ORV) that is regulated separately from other ORVs under some aspects of a state law first enacted in 2013 that allows the vehicle to be used for on-road use in addition to off-road use. Wheeled all-terrain vehicles have four wheels and must meet certain specifications to be regulated under state law.

When a WATV is registered for on-road use, the owner must pay a \$12 fee, and the proceeds are deposited into an account called the Multiuse Roadway Safety Account (Account). Moneys in the Account must be appropriated by the Legislature prior to expenditure. Expenditures may be used only for grants administered by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) for the following purposes: to counties to perform safety engineering analyses of mixed vehicle use on public roads; to local governments to provide funding to erect signage related to the presence of WATVs; and to the Washington State Patrol or local law enforcement to defray the costs of enforcement of WATV regulations and of investigation of accidents involving WATVs. The WSDOT must prioritize grant awards: first, for the purpose of marking highway crossings warning motorists of potential WATV crossings, when a WATV recreation facility is on the opposite side of the highway from an ORV recreation facility parking lot; and second, for the purpose of erecting signage to notify motorists of an upcoming intersection at which WATVs may cross.

The WSDOT Local Programs Division has been appropriated just over \$130,000 from the Account each biennium, starting with the 2015-17 biennium, for the purposes of making grants. However, only six local entities have applied for funding since fiscal year (FY) 2016; these include Okanogan, Lewis, and Pierce counties; and the cities of Granite Falls, Mossyrock, and Sultan. The WSDOT has awarded \$60,000 in grants to these entities.

Revenue to the Account has steadily increased over time. In FY 2014, the first year after enactment of the 2013 legislation, receipts were \$10,888. In FY 2019, receipts were \$149,637.

Summary of Engrossed Bill:

The eligible uses for which grants may be made from the Account are expanded to include grants to counties to enhance or maintain any segment of a road within a county, in which the segment has been designated as part of a travel or tourism route for use by WATVs, and grants for the purpose of purchasing, printing, developing, or using educational brochures or mapping technology that aids the safety and direction of users of WATV routes.

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) Sultan was the first city in the state to authorize all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use on its roads. This authorization is very important for recreation purposes and to connect cities in the area. In 2012 local officials formed a roundtable with stakeholders concerning ATVs to come up with guiding principles. While several of the principles were enacted in 2013, some were left out of the legislation. This bill helps address that omission. It makes sense to use funds generated by ATV registrations for grants for road maintenance, signage, and education.

The stakeholders are seeking not to change the priorities of funding within the Account, but to add in more of the guiding principles. There is a healthy balance in the Account. Stakeholders are working strategically with several counties that have opened up a significant area within their jurisdictions. To get the full balance appropriated will help to advance tourism and local economies.

The United States Forest Service and the Department of Natural Resources have said that they support all forms of recreation. The biggest stumbling block in supporting this recreation is the lack of funding, especially with regards to the maintenance of roads that ATVs use. This bill and a bigger appropriation would be a big lift. The effort has gotten the support of local sheriffs and officials.

In the Mossyrock area, stakeholders have worked with county commissioners to establish an ordinance for ATV travel on roads of 35 miles per hour or less. But the pushback has always been related to who will pay for the signage. This bill will facilitate that by helping to identify tourism routes, as well as which roads are open to ATV travel and which ones are not.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Eslick, prime sponsor; Ted Jackson, Wheeled All-Terrain Vehicle Access Coalition; Mike Richart, Cougar Area Trail Seekers; and Chris Clowe, Cowlitz Basin Off-Road Vehicle Club.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.