

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2197

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Transportation, March 2, 2020

Title: An act relating to establishing an exception to the requirement that vehicle license plates be visible at all times for vehicles using certain cargo carrying devices.

Brief Description: Establishing an exception to the requirement that vehicle license plates be visible at all times for vehicles using certain cargo carrying devices.

Sponsors: Representatives Thai, McCaslin, Walen, Slatter, Tarleton, Appleton, Orwall, Shewmake and Wylie.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/16/20, 96-0.

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/24/20, 3/02/20 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Amended Bill

- Provides the display of a single license plate properly attached to a vehicle that has two license plates properly attached may be temporarily obstructed by a trailer hitch; a wheelchair lift or wheelchair carrier; a trailer being towed by the vehicle; or a bicycle rack, ski rack, or luggage rack.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Hobbs, Chair; Saldaña, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Member; Sheldon, Assistant Ranking Member; Cleveland, Das, Fortunato, Lovelett, Nguyen, O'Ban, Padden, Randall, Takko, Wilson, C. and Zeiger.

Staff: Kim Johnson (786-7472)

Background: Vehicles required to be registered with the Department of Licensing (DOL) must display license plates or decals assigned by DOL. License plates must be:

- attached conspicuously at the front and rear of each vehicle if two license plates have been issued;
- kept clean and be able to be plainly seen and read at all times; and

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.

- attached in a horizontal position at a distance of not more than 4 feet from the ground.

The Washington State Patrol may grant exceptions to the above license plate display requirements if the body construction of the vehicle makes compliance impossible.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Washington state patrol is directed to convene a stakeholder work group to analyze and develop options for addressing the temporary use of cargo carrying devices, the laws governing license plate visibility, and any officer and public safety issues with allowing the rear license plate to be blocked by these devices.

At a minimum, a representative from each of the following groups must be invited to participate:

- Washington association of sheriffs and police chiefs;
- a bicycle advocacy organization;
- an advocacy organization supporting the rights of persons with a disability; and
- Department of Licensing.

A report with any recommendations is due to the Legislature by December 1, 2020.

EFFECT OF TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE AMENDMENT(S):

- Removes the language authorizing the temporary obstruction of a license plate by a cargo carrying device.
- Requires the Washington State Patrol to convene a work group to develop policy options for the temporary use of a cargo carrying device that address concerns with officer and public safety. A report with any recommendations is due to the Legislature by December 1, 2020.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on House Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: This bill came from my constituents. It is a common sense bill allowing partial obstructions of license plates which are temporary in nature. Individuals do not have any intention to break the law. If we want to encourage biking and getting out in the outdoors then we should have policies that make it clear that this is okay. Also, this bill will help address people who need to use mobility assistive devices that are carried on a device outside of the vehicle. The bill will still let officers pull people over, they just cannot give them a ticket.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative My-Linh Thai, Prime Sponsor; Bob Ellis, citizen.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.