

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1546

As Reported by House Committee On:
Transportation

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, Barkis, Dent, Boehnke, Sutherland, Klicker and Robertson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 3/11/21, 3/16/21 [DP].

Brief Summary of 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 26 members: Representatives Fey, Chair; Wylie, 1st Vice Chair; Bronoske, 2nd Vice Chair; Ramos, 2nd Vice Chair; Barkis, Ranking Minority Member; Eslick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Robertson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Volz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berry, Chapman, Dent, Duerr, Entenman, Goehner, Klicker, Lovick, Orcutt, Paul, Ramel, Riccelli, Slatter, Sutherland, Taylor, Valdez, Walsh and Wicks.

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 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.

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 for signage purposes. No jurisdictions have applied for grants in the 2019-21 biennium so far.

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 2020, receipts were \$170,800.

Summary of 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) The bill is needed to implement the budget. The counties are applying for grants anyway. The WATV recreation is part of the \$26 billion outdoor recreation industry for the state.

East Pierce County includes 700 square miles and a road system that leads to tourism opportunities. The key element to planning for WATVs is proper signage that allows constituents to arrive at their destination safely. Pierce County has been a recipient of an Account grant in the past, which has been well-appreciated. It was disappointing to know that the grant program was suspended during the pandemic. This bill would expand the potential uses of the Account, including the production of educational materials and signage, and possibly lead to more state and local revenue, as more people buy vehicles and recreate.

Snohomish County passed a WATV ordinance several years ago and has received an Account grant and is grateful for the funds. This year the county is working on designing routes in the north and east part of the county that will connect our cities, parks, lakes, and county viewing landscapes together, for a multitude of recreating experiences for both our constituents and visitors. The county welcomes the expanded purposes for the Account under the bill, as it will help identify and sustain WATV travel routes, provide partnerships with state and federal recreation agencies, and aid in educating WATV users, with brochures and maps.

The grant categories that are established in this bill were listed in the authorizing legislation in 2013. The proponents are focused on creating these recreating experiences in a few counties, including Pierce, Lewis, Cowlitz, Skamania, and Snohomish, that will serve as implementation models for WATV tourism.

In Cowlitz and Skamania counties, there are tens of thousands of acres of accessible WATV trails. There used to be a state tourism council that provided support to rural communities. Since then, it has been very difficult. This bill will be a tremendous boon, especially on educational materials.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Eslick, prime sponsor; Amy Cruver, Pierce County; Ted Jackson, Washington All-Terrain Vehicle Association; John Graham, Northwest Quad Association; Steve Madsen, Cougar Area Trail Seekers; and Sam Low, Snohomish County.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.