

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1207

As of March 16, 2021

Title: An act relating to improving access to department of licensing issued documents by extending the issuance period of driver licenses and identicards to eight years, allowing online issuance and renewal of instruction permits, and expanding online renewal of driver licenses and identicards.

Brief Description: Improving access to department of licensing issued documents by extending the issuance period of driver licenses and identicards to eight years, allowing online issuance and renewal of instruction permits, and expanding online renewal of driver licenses and identicards.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Ramel, Boehnke, Lekanoff, Lovick, Ortiz-Self, Eslick, Bergquist and Leavitt; by request of Department of Licensing).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/3/21, 81-16.

Committee Activity: Transportation: 3/16/21.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Extends the renewal cycle for standard and enhanced driver's licenses, standard and enhanced identicards, commercial driver's licenses, and motorcycle endorsements from six years to eight years and adjusts the associated fees to reflect the new terms while retaining an option for a six-year renewal term.
- Allows online issuance and renewal of non-photo driver's instruction permits.
- Requires remote photo capture at driver's license and identicard online renewal beginning January 2023.
- Allows driver's licenses and identicards to be renewed online any time through July 2024.

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.

- Specifies that photos must be updated at least every 16 years for persons over 30; and every eight years for persons under 30.
- Requires the Department of Licensing to complete a study of the impacts to employment, backlog reduction, access to services, and other topics and report by December 2023.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Bryon Moore (786-7726)

Background: Driver's Licenses, Identicals, Endorsements, and Driver's Instruction Permits. The Department of Licensing (DOL) is authorized to issue several instruments, such as driver's licenses—standard, enhanced, and commercial; identicals, driver's instruction permits, and motorcycle endorsements, that are related to driving vehicles and providing official identification of individuals. The fees and documentation required for application of the identifying and authorizing instruments vary, but the instruments are generally valid up to six years for qualifying applicants. Driver's instruction permits are valid up to one year. During in-person visits, DOL takes photos of applicants for licenses and some identicals.

Applications for a new license or instruction permit must be signed before an agent authorized to administer oaths, meaning an in-person visit to a DOL office is required. Renewals for driver's licenses and identicals can be made in person, but they may also be made online, as long as the last renewal was not made online. A renewal for an instruction permit must be made in person, and a renewal for an identical without a photo must also be made in person.

Emergency Executive Orders and Response to COVID-19. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, DOL driver licensing offices were closed for several months for all non-commercial driver licensing services starting at the end of March 2020. DOL began reopening driver licensing offices in June 2020, and are open by appointment only with every other counter closed to allow for social distancing. Appointments are available for scheduling 30 days in advance.

In response to DOL's limited capacity for in-person services, the Governor issued and extended proclamations allowing DOL to issue a no-photo instruction permit online, renew driver's instruction permits online, and provide expanded online renewals for driver's licenses and identicals. These are temporary measures.

Summary of Bill: Driver's licenses, commercial driver's licenses, identicals, and motorcycle endorsements are valid for eight years, but DOL must continue to offer the option to issue or renew driver's licenses and identicals for six years. The following fees

are adjusted to reflect the new renewal terms, though the per-year costs remain unchanged.

Category	Per Year Cost	6 Year Cost	8 Year Cost
Standard driver's license/identocard	\$9	\$54	\$72
Enhanced driver's license/Enhanced identocard*	\$4	\$24	\$32
Motorcycle endorsement - initial*	\$2	\$12	\$16
Motorcycle endorsement - renewal*	\$5	\$30	\$40
Commercial driver license*	\$17	\$102	\$136

*The standard driver's license/identocard fee must be paid in addition to the fee amounts on this row.

Online renewals of driver's licenses and identicards are not restricted to every other renewal cycle for the period starting January 2022 until July 2024. Non-photo driver's instruction permit renewals may be made online. Beginning January 2023, persons making online renewals must provide an updated photograph in a form and manner that meets DOL's requirements for remote photo capture. Photographs for renewed driver's licenses and identicards need be updated only every 16 years for persons over 30. Persons under 30 must update their photos every eight years. A sworn statement must be signed by an applicant before someone authorized to administer oaths only for original driver's license issuances.

DOL must evaluate the impact of expanded online renewals and remote photo capture on backlog reduction, access to services, employment public safety, identity fraud, and other related topics in consultation with relevant stakeholders and industry experts. DOL must submit a report to the Governor and the transportation committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2023.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: COVID-19 has significantly impacted the ability of DOL to serve clients. As a result of operating at 35 percent capacity, it has been hard for the citizens to get the licenses and identicards under the appointment only system. A backlog has developed that without changes will take years to resolve. This will help address the backlog and it will allow better services for the public and provide greater convenience. This reflects a compromise proposal that will help us address our backlog and it is DOL's number one priority to help address the effects of the pandemic.

CON: DOL has been very collaborative, as we have worked toward the compromise. With the adoption of the suggested amendment, this will make the last of the needed public safety improvements.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Alex Ramel, Prime Sponsor; Beau Perschbacher, Department of Licensing.

CON: James McMahan, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs.

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