

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1540

As Passed House:

February 28, 2023

Title: An act relating to requiring driver training curriculum to include instruction on sharing the road with large vehicles, including commercial motor vehicles and buses.

Brief Description: Requiring driver training curriculum to include instruction on sharing the road with large vehicles, including commercial motor vehicles and buses.

Sponsors: Representatives Hutchins, Timmons, Low, Cheney, Cortes, Bronoske, Couture, Griffey, Donaghy, Robertson, Barkis, Simmons, Reed, Klicker, Riccelli, Doglio, Berry, Ramel, Paul, Graham and Rule.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/6/23, 2/9/23 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/28/23, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Mandates that instruction regarding large vehicle awareness, including as it relates to sharing the road with commercial motor vehicles and buses, must be included in the required driver training curriculum.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 29 members: Representatives Fey, Chair; Donaghy, Vice Chair; Paul, Vice Chair; Timmons, Vice Chair; Barkis, Ranking Minority Member; Hutchins, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Low, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Robertson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berry, Bronoske, Chapman, Cortes, Dent, Doglio, Duerr, Entenman, Goehner, Griffey, Hackney, Klicker, Mena, Orcutt, Ramel, Ramos, Schmidt, Taylor, Volz, Walsh and Wylie.

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.

Staff: Matthew Williamson (786-7291) and Jennifer Harris (786-7143).

Background:

Driver Training Education Courses.

A driver training education course is a driver's licensing requirement that must be met in certain circumstances. A person must be enrolled in a driver training education course as a condition of obtaining a driver's instruction permit. A person must have passed a driver training education course as a condition of obtaining an intermediate driver's license, which is available to individuals at least 16 years old. In addition, a person under 18 years old must have passed a driver training education course as a condition of obtaining a driver's license (with Department of Licensing [DOL] discretion to grant waivers in limited circumstances).

Driver training education courses may be administered by school districts or private driver training schools.

Driver Training Course Curriculum Requirements.

State law requires driver training education courses to include a minimum of 30 hours of classroom instruction and six hours of behind-the-wheel operation under a licensed instructor, or five or more hours of behind-the-wheel operation and four or more hours of driving simulation instruction under the supervision and direction of a licensed instructor, and one or more hours of additional in-vehicle driver observation.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the DOL, in consultation with Central Washington University traffic safety instructors or program content developers, jointly develop and maintain a required curriculum for driver training education courses. This curriculum must be followed by private driver training school courses and school districts that operate driver training education programs.

Most curriculum requirements are set by rule and include training on rules of the road, vehicle components, vehicle handling, driver behavior, sharing the road, attention and perception, hazard and risk management, vehicle maintenance, malfunctions, technology, managing emergencies and adverse conditions, respect and responsibilities, and vehicle technology systems. However, certain topics are specifically required under state law. In addition to information on the safe, lawful, and responsible operation of motor vehicles on highways, the required curriculum and instructional materials must include information on:

- intermediate driver's license issuance;
- passenger and driving restrictions and sanctions for violating these restrictions;
- the effect of traffic violations and collisions on driving privileges;
- the effects of alcohol and drug use on motor vehicle operators;
- motorcycle awareness;
- bicycle safety;
- pedestrian safety;

- proper use of the left-hand lane by motor vehicles on multilane highways; and
- bicyclists' and pedestrians' rights and responsibilities and suggested riding procedures in common traffic situations.

Summary of Bill:

Commercial motor vehicle, bus, and other large vehicle awareness related to the importance of sharing the road must be included in the driver training education course curriculum requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on April 1, 2024.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Driver education should include instruction on how to share the road with large commercial vehicles and buses, which are common on Washington roads. Data from the Washington Traffic Safety Commission has shown the value of properly training drivers at a young age. It indicates that requiring this training could save lives. There is significant potential for injury and loss of life, as well as for disruption to economic activities, should drivers remain untrained about how to safely share the road with these vehicles.

Washington State Patrol data indicates that, for accidents involving a passenger vehicle and a commercial motor vehicle where a fatality occurred, fault was attributed to the driver of the passenger vehicle 79 percent of the time. For accidents involving a passenger vehicle and a commercial motor vehicle where a non-fatal injury occurred, the rate was 60 percent. Driving a commercial vehicle is a difficult job that can be made more dangerous if other road users are not aware of the characteristics of these vehicles and the limitations on their ability to brake and maneuver.

This bill is consistent with other actions the Legislature is considering this session to make our roadways safer. Moreover, there is no fiscal impact created by the new requirement, since the bill was designed to integrate into the existing processes the DOL and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction use for development of the driver training curriculum.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Spencer Hutchins, prime sponsor; Jeff DeVere and Abigail Potter, Washington Trucking Associations; and Melissa Pace, Pace Consulting and Commercial Drivers License Training.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:

David-Henry Sedelmeier, Apex Driving School.