
Transportation Committee

HB 1537

Brief Description: Expanding access to funding from the multiuse roadway safety account for eligible cities and for the Washington state departments of natural resources and fish and wildlife for maintenance and guidance of motorized recreation on green dot roads.

Sponsors: Representative Barkis.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands the use of the Multiuse Roadway Safety Account (MRSA) to allow for the Washington State Department of Transportation to make interagency transfers to the Washington State Departments of Natural Resources and of Fish and Wildlife to help preserve roads managed by those agencies upon which wheeled all-terrain vehicles (WATVs) are authorized to travel, as well as for WATV-related signage and educational materials.
- Allows cities that have adopted ordinances allowing the travel of WATVs within their jurisdictions to be eligible to apply for MRSA funding.

Hearing Date: 1/29/25

Staff: Mark Matteson (786-7145).

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.

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.

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.

Since fiscal year 2016, the WSDOT has awarded \$68,000 in grants to various counties for signage purposes.

Summary of Bill:

The allowable uses of the Account are expanded. The WSDOT may make interagency transfers from the Account to the Washington State Departments of Natural Resources (DNR) and of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to help preserve roads managed by those agencies upon which WATVs are authorized to travel, as well as for the purposes of WATV-related signage and educational and mapping materials. Cities or towns that have approved the operation of WATVs on roadways within their jurisdictions are also eligible to apply to the WSDOT for Account grants for WATV purposes.

Before an interagency transfer to either the DNR or the WDFW, the county or counties in which the proposed DNR or WDFW project would take place must submit a letter of support both to the implementing department and to the WSDOT.

The WSDOT must limit any interagency transfers to the DNR or the WDFW to the second year of the fiscal biennium. The WSDOT must also manage the interagency transfers such that a minimum of \$80,000 is available in the Account during the fiscal biennium for grants to eligible local governments.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 25, 2025.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2025.