

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1616

As Passed House:

February 20, 2025

Title: An act relating to expanding the locations where a person can be guilty of unlawful transit conduct to include the Washington state ferries.

Brief Description: Expanding the locations where a person can be guilty of unlawful transit conduct to include the Washington state ferries.

Sponsors: Representatives Reed, Berry, Ramel, Parshley, Leavitt, Bernbaum, Thai, Ormsby, Ryu and Nance.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/3/25, 2/6/25 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/20/25, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Adds Washington State Ferries to the list of places where the misdemeanor crime of unlawful transit conduct can occur.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 27 members: Representatives Fey, Chair; Bernbaum, Vice Chair; Donaghy, Vice Chair; Reed, Vice Chair; Barkis, Ranking Minority Member; Low, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Mendoza, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Schmidt, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bronoske, Dent, Duerr, Entenman, Griffey, Hunt, Klicker, Ley, Nance, Orcutt, Paul, Ramel, Richards, Stuebe, Taylor, Timmons, Volz, Wylie and Zahn.

Staff: Michael Hirsch (786-7195).

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:

Unlawful transit conduct is a misdemeanor crime, and includes various prohibited activities conducted while in or on a transit vehicle or transit station owned or operated by a transit authority. A misdemeanor is punishable by up to 90 days in jail or a fine of up to \$1,000, or both.

Unlawful transit conduct includes knowingly smoking outside of designated areas; littering or dumping or discarding hazardous substances and automotive fuels; playing sounds not for an individual listener or unreasonably disturbing others including by engaging in harassing behavior; spitting, expectorating, urinating, or defecating outside of appropriate plumbing fixtures; carrying any material likely to cause harm to others; consuming an alcoholic beverage without authorization by the transit authority; obstructing the flow of transit vehicles or passenger traffic; damaging transit property; possessing or tendering an unissued fare media; falsely claiming to be a transit employee; gambling; skating or riding on a wheeled device; throwing an object with the intent to do harm; and refusing to obey the commands of an agent of the transit authority or peace officer to stop engaging in conduct that is inconsistent with the intended use and purpose of the transit facility, transit station, or transit vehicle.

As defined for the purpose of the misdemeanor of unlawful transit conduct:

- A transit vehicle is defined as any motor vehicle, street car, train, trolley, or ferry boat that is owned or operated by a transit authority or an entity providing service on behalf of a transit authority, for the purpose of carrying passengers on a regular schedule.
- A transit station or transit facility is defined as all passenger facilities and properties owned, leased, held, or used by a transit authority for the purpose of providing public transportation services.
- A transit authority is defined as a city or county public transportation system, a metropolitan municipal corporation public transportation system, or any special purpose district formed to operate a public transportation system, including regional transportation authorities and public transportation benefit areas.

Summary of Bill:

The definition of transit authority is expanded to include the Washington State Ferries (WSF).

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 WSF employees deserve the same protections that bus and other transit operators receive. Washington State Patrol has fewer enforcement tools on WSF ferries than on other transit modes. People take out their frustration with the ferry system on ferry workers and this bill is a low cost way to show support for ferry workers.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Julia Reed, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.