

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1822

As Reported by House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to establishing a driver work zone and first responder safety course requirement.

Brief Description: Establishing a driver work zone and first responder safety course requirement.

Sponsors: Representatives Low, Stearns, Berry, Walen, Fosse, Ramel, Barkis, Salahuddin, Richards and Zahn.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/10/25, 2/20/25 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires that an applicant for a new driver's license under the age of 26 pass an online course approved by the Department of Licensing (DOL) on driver work zone and first responder safety.
- Requires that the DOL contract with a provider of an online driver work zone and first responder safety course to host an online course that satisfies the online course requirement, with the online course to be made available at no cost to Washington residents between the ages of 15 and 25.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill 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

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.

Ranking Minority Member; Bronoske, Dent, Duerr, Entenman, Griffey, Hunt, Klicker, Ley, Nance, Orcutt, Paul, Ramel, Richards, Stuebe, Taylor, Timmons, Volz, Wylie and Zahn.

Staff: Jennifer Harris (786-7143).

Background:

To be eligible to obtain a driver's license, a person under the age of 18 must complete a driver training education course offered by a private driver training school licensed by the Department of Licensing (DOL) or by a school district.

Traffic safety education courses offered by a private driver training school for individuals under the age of 18 must include:

1. at least 30 hours of classroom instruction;
2. at least 6 hours of behind-the-wheel instruction (or 5 or more hours of behind-the-wheel instruction and 4 or more hours of driving simulation); and
3. one or more hours of in-vehicle driver observation.

Traffic safety education courses offered by school districts must include a minimum of:

1. 30 hours of classroom instruction;
2. 6 hours of driving experience; and
3. 4 hours of driving observation time.

The DOL and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction maintain a required curriculum for approved private driver training schools and school districts that operate a driver training education program. The required curriculum includes content to develop knowledge, skills, and awareness. It is required to cover: (1) rules of the road; (2) vehicle components; (3) vehicle handling; (4) driver behavior; (5) sharing the road; (6) attention and perception; (7) hazard and risk management; (8) vehicle maintenance, malfunctions, and technology; (9) managing emergencies and adverse conditions; (10) respect and responsibility; and (11) vehicle technology systems.

The DOL may waive the driver training education course requirement if an applicant was licensed to drive a motor vehicle outside the state and provides proof that he or she completed driver education equivalent to Washington's education requirement.

An applicant for a driver's license 18 years of age or older must successfully pass a driver licensing exam, but is not required to complete a driver training education course to be eligible for a license.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

An applicant for a new driver's license under the age of 26 must pass an online course

approved by the DOL on driver work zone and first responder safety. A "new driver's license" is defined as a driver's license issued to a driver who has not previously been issued a driver's license in Washington. The DOL may waive this requirement if the DOL finds that the online driver work zone and first responder safety course is unavailable at the time of application.

The DOL is required to contract with a provider of an online driver work zone and first responder safety course to host an online course that satisfies this course requirement. The course is to be made available at no cost to Washington residents between the ages of 15 and 25.

The revenue generated from the deployment of speed safety camera systems by the Washington State Department of Transportation to be used for the purposes of traffic safety, including driver training education, may be used to fund the required online work zone and first responder safety course.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill shifts responsibility for contracting with a provider of an online driver work zone and first responder safety course from the Washington Traffic Safety Commission to the DOL, and replaces an effective date of January 1, 2026 with an effective date of May 1, 2026.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect on May 1, 2026.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Work zone safety is of the highest importance. Workers doing planned and unplanned maintenance on highways are putting themselves in harms way. Everything possible needs to be done to make sure highway workers come home safely to their families every night. The bill requires the next generation of drivers to be educated about work zone safety. This is the least that can be done to keep workers safe.

Drivers receive no training on how to navigate driving in a work zone. Education about work zone safety teaches drivers to have empathy by understanding that there is a face and a family behind every flashing light. Oklahoma became the first state to require a course on work zone safety, with other states following.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Sam Low, prime sponsor; Kati Durkin, Washington Federation of State Employees; Tom Robins, Solid Foundation Consulting; Mallorie Davies, Washington and N. Idaho District Council of Laborers; and Billy Wallace, LIUWA (Laborers).

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.