

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2495

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to the removal of vehicles by certain cities when obstructing the operation of streetcar vehicles or jeopardizing public safety.

Brief Description: Addressing the removal of vehicles by certain cities when obstructing the operation of streetcar vehicles or jeopardizing public safety.

Sponsors: Representatives Thomas, Reed, Scott, Fitzgibbon, Ryu, Parshley, Macri, Street, Pollet and Obras.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/26/26, 2/5/26 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/17/26, 96-1.

Passed Senate: 3/6/26, 48-0.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows certain cities to have their authorized representatives direct the impoundment of vehicles obstructing streetcar operations, if the vehicle is within the right-of-way used for streetcar operations.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 28 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, Duerr, Engell, Entenman, Griffey, Hackney, Hall, Klicker, Ley, Nance, Orcutt, Paul, Ramel, Richards, Stuebe, Taylor, Timmons, Volz, Wylie and Zahn.

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: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

Unauthorized vehicles may be impounded by a registered tow truck operator (RTTO) at the direction of a law enforcement officer or other public official with jurisdiction, if the vehicle is on public property, or at the direction of the property owner or an agent. A vehicle is deemed unauthorized if it is left unattended in certain public or private locations. A vehicle is immediately considered an unauthorized vehicle and subject to removal if it is:

- determined by a police officer to be an accident or traffic hazard;
- in a publicly owned or controlled parking facility with proper posted signage;
- on residential property;
- on private, nonresidential property with proper posted signage; or
- within the right-of-way used by a Regional Transit Authority for high-capacity transportation where the vehicle constitutes an obstruction to the operation of high-capacity transportation vehicles or jeopardizes public safety.

The city of Seattle is the only city in Washington with a population greater than 700,000.

Summary of Bill:

A vehicle is considered an unauthorized vehicle and is subject to immediate removal by an RTTO if it is left unattended within a right-of-way used by a city with a population greater than 700,000 for streetcar operations, where the vehicle obstructs the operation of a streetcar vehicle or jeopardizes public safety. An authorized representative of a city with a population greater than 700,000 may request an impound for this type of unauthorized vehicle.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Occasionally, vehicles get left on the tracks, obstructing the ability to use rapid transit to move people around during events. This bill would allow those vehicles to be impounded and moved without having to engage law enforcement, which has better things to do than call for tow trucks.

House Bill 2495 is a straightforward bill that would extend the City of Seattle's similar authority to what was granted to Sound Transit for light rail vehicles a few years back. In this case, it would allow city transportation officials the ability to have vehicles blocking

streetcar tracks removed without waiting until a police officer is available to first cite the vehicle.

About once or twice a day, there are reports of private vehicles blocking the streetcar tracks, often an illegally parked vehicle that may be obstructing the tracks by just a few inches. Under the current law, a streetcar operator encountering an obstructed track calls to dispatch, who then connects with the Seattle Police Department to dispatch a parking enforcement or regular officer. After hours or on Sundays, only fully commissioned officers may be available, and streetcar passengers, and sometimes even the traffic behind the streetcar, may have to wait for more than an hour until an officer may be available to authorize towing.

House Bill 2495 will eliminate the need to wait on a police officer, and allow city transportation authorities to immediately seek impoundment, thereby resuming normal operations much more quickly.

One thing to note is the First Hill streetcar line connects many of the densest, highest transit-using neighborhoods in Seattle, providing critical service to hospitals, schools, and neighborhoods, while also connecting to Link light rail and major destinations, like the stadiums.

With major upcoming events like the World Cup and the expansion of the regional transit system, the timing of this bill is critical to ensure that transportation infrastructure is prepared for both daily and event driven demand.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Brianna Thomas, prime sponsor; and Alison Redenz, SDOT Streetcar Program Manager.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.