

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6066

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Local Government, January 22, 2026

Title: An act relating to establishing accident risk zones.

Brief Description: Establishing accident risk zones. [**Revised for 1st Substitute:** Establishing crash prevention zones.]

Sponsors: Senators Torres, Dozier and Wilson, J..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Local Government: 1/15/26, 1/22/26 [DPS-TRAN].

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Allows a county, city, town, or the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to create a crash prevention zone (zone) by identifying public roads where there have been a multitude of collisions that have caused serious injuries or fatalities.
- Requires the jurisdiction to conduct an engineering and traffic investigation of the public roads in the zone.
- Requires penalties for certain traffic infractions be increased if signs are posted in the zone.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6066 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Transportation.

Signed by Senators Salomon, Chair; Lovelett, Vice Chair; Torres, Ranking Member; Bateman and Goehner.

Staff: Karen Epps (786-7424)

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: Growth Management Act. The Growth Management Act (GMA) is the comprehensive land use planning framework for counties and cities in Washington. The GMA establishes land use designation and environmental protection requirements for all Washington counties and cities. The GMA also establishes a significantly wider array of planning duties for 28 counties, and the cities within those counties, that are obligated to satisfy all planning requirements of the GMA. These jurisdictions are sometimes said to be fully planning under the GMA.

When developing their comprehensive plans, counties and cities must consider various goals set forth in statute. The transportation goal encourages efficient multimodal transportation systems based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city transportation plans.

Washington Department of Transportation. The Department of Transportation (WSDOT) was established as the central governing body for Washington's transportation functions. WSDOT's mission is to provide safe, reliable and cost-effective transportation options to improve communities and economic vitality for people and businesses.

Traffic Laws Relating to Excessive Vehicle Speed. A driver who operates a vehicle in excess of the posted speed limit commits a traffic infraction, with certain exceptions, and is subject to a fine, as determined by the magnitude of the speed in excess of the limit and as prescribed under state court rules. Traffic infractions for speeding may also be issued for driving a vehicle at a speed that is too fast for given roadway conditions or over certain speed limits within school zones at certain times of day.

The Washington State Supreme Court is responsible for prescribing by rule a monetary base penalty schedule for traffic infractions, and is requested to adjust the base penalty schedule every two years for inflation. Any traffic infraction not listed in the base penalty schedule carries a base penalty amount of \$48, not including additional statutory assessments. Additional statutory assessments are imposed on every traffic infraction unless expressly provided otherwise.

A portion of the base penalty amount for traffic infractions is composed of a judicial information systems (JIS) assessment that may not be waived or reduced and is distributed to the JIS account, with the remainder of the base penalty amount distributed to the local jurisdiction and to the state general fund.

Summary of Bill (First Substitute): The legislative body of a county, city, or town, or WSDOT may create a crash prevention zone (zone) by identifying public roads where there have been a multitude of collisions that caused serious injuries or fatalities. A county, city, or town or WSDOT may consider and implement safety improvement approaches in designated zones. A county, with the approval of a city or town, may designate a zone that includes roadways that include public roads within the county and city or town. A county, city, or town may designate a zone that includes roadways managed by WSDOT with the

approval of WSDOT. WSDOT may designate a zone on a state highway without the approval of a county, city, or town. A public hearing must be held prior to the establishment of a zone.

Once a zone has been designated, the jurisdiction that established the zone must conduct an engineering and traffic investigation of the public roads in the zone to identify safety improvements, including adjustments to the speed limits. A county, city, or town may contract with WSDOT to have them conduct an engineering and traffic investigation of the public roads in the zone. State Patrol and local law enforcement agencies must coordinate increased enforcement of traffic laws within the zone in a manner intended to reduce accident risks.

If signs are posted within a zone stating that penalties are increased, then the monetary penalty for traffic infractions for speeding or infractions associated with a vehicle collision must be increased by \$73. \$73 of the penalties must be deposited into an account created for the zone and may be used to pay for the engineering and traffic investigation, creation and installation of road signs, safety improvements, and increased law enforcement presence in the zone. The account be administered and maintained by the jurisdiction in which the infraction occurred.

The zone must be dissolved once safety improvements have been implemented. A city, county, or WSDOT may dissolve a zone under certain circumstances:

- at the discretion of the city, county, or WSDOT that created the zone;
- at the recommendation of WSDOT to a city or county; or
- by a petition of 10 percent of the property owners, residents, or business owners with property that abuts or is within the zone that is presented to the city, county, or WSDOT that created the zone.

The designation, establishment, investigation, or dissolution of a zone, or any data, reports, maps, county staff comments, public comments, engineering studies, prior testimony, or other materials prepared or used in connection with the creation or management of a zone, is not admissible as evidence in any civil action.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE (First Substitute):

- Changes the term accident risk to crash prevention.
- Clarifies that the legislative body of a county, city, or town or the Secretary of WSDOT may create a crash prevention zone within its jurisdiction by identifying public roads where there have been a multitude of collisions that have caused serious injuries or fatalities, rather than accidents.
- Clarifies that a county, city, or town or WSDOT may consider and implement safety improvement approaches in designated crash prevention zones.
- Clarifies that the jurisdiction establishing a zone must conduct an engineering and

traffic investigation of the public roads in the zone and provides that a county, city, or town may contract with WSDOT to have them conduct an engineering and traffic investigation of the public roads in the zone.

- Establishes that a county, city, or town may designate a crash prevention zone that includes roadways managed by WSDOT with the approval of WSDOT and provides that WSDOT may designate a crash prevention zone on a state highway without the approval of a county, city, or town.
- Allows for increased monetary penalties of \$73 for speed-related traffic infractions or infractions related to a vehicle collision within the zone if signs are posted stating that penalties are increased in the zone. Provides that \$73 of these monetary penalties must be deposited into an account created for the crash prevention zone and requires that the account be administered and maintained by the jurisdiction in which the infraction occurred.
- Establishes that the designation, establishment, investigation, or dissolution of a crash prevention zone, or any data, reports, maps, county staff comments, public comments, engineering studies, prior testimony, or other materials prepared or used in connection with the creation or management of a crash prevention zone, is not admissible as evidence in any civil action.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: This bill is designed to address an increase in fatalities in certain areas. This bill supports the policy goal of improving traffic safety. There are two intersections in the community that have regularly been the site of serious injury and fatal accidents and this bill responds to the need to address these dangerous interchanges.

OTHER: There is strong support for the policy goal of this bill and some concerns about implementation and liability. The bill provides a voluntary way for local governments to this important work but the bill needs to have some protection for municipalities from liability.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Nikki Torres, Prime Sponsor; Harold Stewart, City Manager at the City of Pasco; Steven Ellis, Association of Washington Cities.

OTHER: Brad Tower, Washington Counties Risk Pool; Axel Swanson, Washington State Association of Counties.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.