

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6066

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As of January 15, 2026

**Title:** An act relating to establishing accident risk zones.

**Brief Description:** Establishing accident risk zones.

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

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Local Government: 1/15/26.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Allows a county, city, town, or the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to create an accident risk zone (zone) identifying public roads where there have been a multitude of accidents.
- Requires the jurisdiction or WSDOT to conduct an engineering and traffic investigation of the public roads in the zone.
- Requires penalties for certain traffic infractions be doubled if signs are posted in the zone.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**Staff:** Karen Epps (786-7424)

**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.

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*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 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:** The legislative body of a county, city, or town, or WSDOT may create an accident risk zone (zone) identifying public roads where there have been a multitude of accidents to provide time for authorities to investigate and implement safety improvements in the designated areas. 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 public hearing must be held prior to the establishment of a zone.

Once a zone has been designated, the jurisdiction that established the zone or WSDOT must conduct an engineering and traffic investigation of the public roads in the zone to identify safety improvements, including adjustments to the speed limits. 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 doubled, then the monetary

penalty for traffic infractions for speeding or infractions associated with a vehicle collision must be doubled. One-half of those doubled 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 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.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 12, 2026.

**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:** 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.