

SENATE BILL REPORT

E2SSB 6066

As Amended by House, March 6, 2026

Title: An act relating to establishing crash prevention zones.

Brief Description: Establishing crash prevention zones.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Torres, Dozier and Wilson, J.).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Local Government: 1/15/26, 1/22/26 [DPS-TRAN].
Transportation: 2/02/26, 2/09/26 [DP2S, w/oRec].

Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 2/17/26, 46-3.
Passed House: 3/6/26, 94-2.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill

- Allows a county, city, town, or the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT), until January 1, 2029, to create a crash prevention zone (zone) on a certain portion of U.S. Highway 395.
- Allows a county, city, town, or WSDOT, beginning January 1, 2029, to create a zone by identifying public roads where the incidence of collisions resulting in serious injuries or fatalities is greater than expected for similar roads or highways, as appropriate.
- Authorizes local jurisdictions that create a zone to use automated traffic safety cameras to detect speed violations committed within the zone.
- Doubles the penalty amount for unlawful use of a personal electronic device if committed while driving in a zone.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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.

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)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 6066 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Lias, Chair; Krishnadasan, Vice Chair; Lovick, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Member; Goehner, Assistant Ranking Member; Chapman, Harris, Hunt, Shewmake and Valdez.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Alvarado, Christian, Fortunato, MacEwen, Nobles and Wilson, J..

Staff: Brandon Popovac (786-7465)

Background: I-2 Safety Program. The Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT), through its I-2 safety program, provides regional roadway analyses and public outreach consistent with current highway safety project practices. The process followed, documentation required, and roles and responsibilities outlined for the I-2 safety program are informed by statutory transportation system policy goals and laws related to the federal Highway Safety Improvement Program. Using a Target Zero strategic approach under the program, WSDOT identifies and determines which locations have the highest potential for the reduction of fatal and serious injury crashes and return the greatest benefit for the cost of the project.

City Streets—State Highways. Certain city streets are designated as part of the state highway system. For cities or towns with populations of 32,500 or less, WSDOT is responsible for installing and maintaining on such streets: slope stability, traffic control signals, signs, striping, lane marking, and channelization. Once a city or town's population exceeds the 32,500 population threshold as determined by the Office of Financial Management, the transfer of installation and maintenance responsibilities from WSDOT to the city or town takes effect three years from the date of determination. The city or town is then responsible for such installation and maintenance responsibilities at their own expense, subject to approval of WSDOT for the installation and type only. Regardless of city or town population, WSDOT retains full responsibility for route markers and directional signs, along with all maintenance for limited access facilities.

Counties may establish, construct, and improve highways within cities and towns of that county for certain purposes subject to approval by WSDOT for such use or development on

any state highway.

Local Automated Traffic Safety Cameras. Local automated traffic safety cameras may be used to detect a variety of moving violations, including speeding in various authorized locations and zones. The local legislative authority with jurisdiction where the traffic safety cameras are to be located must prepare an analysis of the locations within the jurisdiction where traffic safety cameras are proposed to be located before enacting an ordinance authorizing their use. The analysis must include an assessment of equity considerations, and consider the results of the equity assessment when identifying where to locate traffic safety cameras. The analysis must also show a demonstrated need for traffic safety cameras based on rates of collision reports showing near collisions, travel by vulnerable roadway users, evidence of vehicles speeding, and on anticipated or actual ineffectiveness or infeasibility of other mitigation measures.

Additional requirements and conditions on the use of automated traffic safety cameras include certain signage and reporting requirements, restrictions on the use of camera images, notice of infraction processes and adjudication requirements, and limitations on the use of camera infraction revenue.

Operating a Vehicle While Using a Personal Electronic Device. It is unlawful to use a personal electronic device while driving, with exceptions. The base penalty amount for using a personal electronic device while driving is \$48.

Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill: Until January 1, 2029, the legislative body of a county, city, or town, or WSDOT may create a crash prevention zone (zone) within its jurisdiction on the portion of U.S. Highway 395 from milepost 23 to milepost 32 between Pasco and Mesa.

Beginning January 1, 2029, the legislative body of a county, city, or town may create a zone within its jurisdiction by identifying public roads where the incidence of collisions resulting in serious injuries or fatalities is greater than expected for similar roads. WSDOT may create a zone within its jurisdiction by identifying public roads where the incidence of collisions resulting in serious injuries and fatalities is greater than expected for similar highways over the previous five-year period using adopted processes in the Highway Safety Manual as published by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. 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 on the zone map must be held before 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 any adjustments to the speed limits. A county, city, or town may contract with WSDOT to conduct an engineering and traffic investigation of the public roads in the zone. The Washington State Patrol (WSP) and local law enforcement agencies must coordinate, within existing resources and to the extent practicable, increased enforcement of traffic laws within the zone in a manner intended to reduce collisions in the zone. WSDOT may use speed reduction methods, approaches, and technologies to reduce speeding within any zone it establishes. A city, town, or county may use automated traffic safety cameras to detect speed violations committed within a zone, subject to current requirements and conditions on the use of such cameras, with an authorized penalty amount of up to \$290 for each infraction.

For each zone created by a city, town, or county, a corresponding local account must be created and administered by the jurisdiction. Any revenue generated from the use of automated traffic safety cameras to detect speeding violations committed in a zone must first be used to cover the costs of camera administration, including the cost of processing infractions, with any remaining revenue to be deposited into the corresponding local account.

The base penalty amount for unlawfully using a personal electronic device while driving is doubled if the infraction occurs within a zone. The total penalty amount, including statutory assessments, may not be waived, reduced, or suspended. Fifty percent of the penalty amount collected must be deposited into the highway safety fund for such infractions committed in a zone established by WSDOT, to be used only for the same zone purposes applicable to a local corresponding account.

The zone must be dissolved once safety improvements have been implemented. Until January 1, 2029, a zone may also be dissolved at the discretion of the jurisdiction that created the zone. Beginning January 1, 2029, a zone may also be dissolved by the jurisdiction that created the zone or by direction of the Washington State Legislature.

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.

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 (Local Government): *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 (Local Government): 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 (Local Government): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on First Substitute (Transportation): *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: There have been too many and very recent fatal crashes on US 395 by Pasco. The bill is informed by local community meetings and a demand for a response. According to WSP, more than 250 crashes have occurred in that specific corridor. The prime sponsor has worked with multiple stakeholders to address these safety concerns. WSDOT would have jurisdiction over the impacted stretch of this corridor. US 12 has also seen lots of crashes and fatalities. The penalty for an infraction in a designated zone should not be capped at the current amount but simply doubled. The bill provides a framework for counties to address transportation infrastructure safety issues.

CON: Every road should be considered within a crash prevention zone. Local issues should be dealt with at the local level and not at the state level. The bill creates another layer of government without a solution and only generates revenue.

Persons Testifying (Transportation): PRO: Senator Nikki Torres, Prime Sponsor; Maria Serra, Public Works Director at the City of Pasco; Brad Tower, Washington Counties Risk Pool.

CON: Stephen Alldridge.

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

EFFECT OF HOUSE AMENDMENT(S):

- Authorizes local jurisdictions to create a crash prevention zone (zone) between designated portions of Highway 12 prior to January 1, 2029.
- Removes WSDOT's authority to create a zone in the areas specified prior to January 1, 2029.
- Clarifies that zones established prior to January 1, 2029 do not have any specific date by when they must be dissolved.
- Requires local jurisdictions to use the same look-back horizon of five years and the same processes in the Highway Safety Manual published by the Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials as WSDOT is required to use to establish a zone, including in those zones established prior to January 1, 2029.
- Exempts WSDOT from being required to conduct a public hearing before a zone is established, but requires a WSDOT regional administrator to be invited to attend a public hearing conducted by a local jurisdiction.
- Clarifies that the engineering and traffic investigation of public roads in zones identify options for safety improvements.
- Expands the authorization for WSDOT to use speed reduction methods, approaches, and technologies to reduce speeding within zones to apply to any zone regardless of the establishing jurisdiction.