

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHB 1466

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 24, 2006

Title: An act relating to motorcycles at traffic signals.

Brief Description: Allowing street legal motorcycles to stop and proceed through traffic signals that fail to operate because of the motorcycle's size.

Sponsors: Representatives Flannigan, Woods, Darneille, Condotta, Kirby, Orcutt, Simpson, Haigh, Nixon, Chase, Strow, Hunt, Blake, Campbell and Kagi.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/11/05, 92-1; 1/18/06, 94-2.

Committee Activity: Transportation: 3/21/05, 3/31/05, 2/24/06 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Jacobsen, Vice Chair; Benson, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Eide, Esser, Finkbeiner, Kastama, Sheldon, Spanel and Swecker.

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

Background: All vehicle operators are required to obey traffic control devices, including traffic signals at intersections. Some of these traffic signals are equipped with sensors that determine when a vehicle has approached the intersection. Once detected by the sensor, the traffic signal will initiate a change in, or extension of, a traffic signal phase (e.g., change a red light to green).

Summary of Amended Bill: If a motorcyclist approaches a left turn intersection controlled by a triggered traffic control signal using a vehicle detection device, and that signal is inoperative due to the size of the motorcycle, the motorcyclist must come to a complete stop. If the turn signal fails to operate after one cycle, the motorcyclist may proceed to turn left after exercising due care.

It is not a defense to a traffic citation for failure to obey a traffic control signal when a motorcyclist proceeds under the belief that: (1) a traffic control signal used a vehicle detection device, when it did not; or (2) a traffic control signal was inoperative due to the size of the motorcycle, when the device was in fact operative.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: Language was added clarifying that motorcyclists may not proceed if cross traffic is present and that motorcyclists still have a duty to yield to traffic operating in the intersection area and to pedestrians that may be in the area.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on September 1, 2006.

Testimony For: Currently, there is no legal option to go left through an intersection against a red left-turn light that never turns green under a triggering sensor. Some motorcyclists end up having to merge right back into oncoming traffic, which is a dangerous situation. Under this bill, motorcyclists would still have to exercise caution when proceeding against a red left-turn light. No problems have been reported from Tennessee, the state from which this legislation was modeled.

Testimony Against: None.

Testimony Other: Some concerns were raised regarding the need for this legislation.

Who Testified: PRO: Leanne Horn, ABATE of WA; Larry Walker, WA Road Riders Assn.

CON: None.

OTHER: Ashley Probart, Assn. of WA Cities; Doug Levy, Cities of Everett, Federal Way, Renton, Puyallup.