

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESSB 5583

Brief Description: Improving young driver safety.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Liias, Wilson, C., Kauffman, Valdez, Lovelett, Lovick, Nguyen and Nobles).

Senate Committee on Transportation

House Committee on Transportation

Background: Driver Training Education. The Department of Licensing (DOL) requires individuals under the age of 18 to obtain an instruction permit, and to complete a driver training education course to be eligible to obtain an intermediate driver's license. These requirements do not apply to individuals aged 18 or older.

For individuals under the age of 18, DOL may waive the driver training requirement if they satisfy certain conditions established in statute and rule, or if they were licensed to drive a motor vehicle or motorcycle outside of the state and provide proof they completed an equivalent driver training education course. To meet the traffic safety education requirement for a motorcycle endorsement, the individual must successfully complete a motorcycle safety education course that meets standards established by DOL.

Private driver training schools and some school districts offer driver training education courses.

Driver Training Education Curriculum. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and DOL are required to jointly develop and maintain a required curriculum for school districts and approved private schools operating a traffic safety education program. The director of DOL is responsible for the administration and enforcement of laws pertaining to private driver training schools and driver training education courses, and may adopt and enforce administrative rules related to these laws.

DOL must develop and maintain a basic minimum required curriculum for school districts and private driver training schools. The minimum length of instruction, as set by administrative rule, is 30 hours of classroom instruction, six hours of driving experience, and four hours of driving observation time.

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.

Classroom instruction may be offered through in-person, classroom-based instruction or virtual classroom-based student instruction with a live instructor, as set by administrative rule.

Driver Training Instructors. To be licensed as a driver training instructor for a private driver training school, a person must have been licensed to drive for five or more years, may not have specified traffic violations on their record, be a high school graduate or the equivalent, be at least 21 years of age, and must have satisfactorily completed a course of instruction approved by DOL that is at least 60 hours in length and includes classroom and behind-the-wheel teaching methods and supervised practice.

Intermediate Driver's License. Individuals between the ages of 16 and 18 are eligible for an intermediate driver's license if certain criteria are met, including:

- possession of a valid instruction permit for at least six months;
- passed a driver's licensing examination; and
- passed a driver training education course.

Among certain restrictions, an intermediate license holder may not operate a motor vehicle between the hours of 1 a.m. and 5 a.m., except when the holder is accompanied by a parent, guardian, or licensed driver who is at least 25 years of age.

Summary: Driver Training Education. DOL must develop a comprehensive implementation plan for the expansion of the current driver training education requirement to obtain a driver's license for persons between the ages of 18 and 24. The target date for implementation of the new driver training education expansion is July 1, 2026. The driver training education expansion plan must be provided to the transportation committees of the Legislature by October 1, 2024. The plan must include the following:

- consideration of the types of courses that could satisfy the new driver training education requirement, including a condensed course option and a self-paced, online course option;
- an assessment of public and private resources necessary to support the new driver training education requirement to ensure sufficient course availability and accessibility;
- an evaluation of access to driver training education courses and consideration of opportunities to improve access to driver training education for young drivers, in consultation with the Office of Equity;
- a plan for public outreach and education to communicate to Washington residents new driver training education requirements;
- collaboration with educational service districts to determine the extent to which they can facilitate the coordination between school districts or secondary schools of a school district and driver training schools;
- an examination of opportunities to address the financial need of persons for whom the cost of driver training education courses licensed by DOL may pose a hardship,

- through a voucher or other financial assistance program;
- an examination, in consultation with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, of opportunities to address the financial need of students for whom the cost of driver training education offered as part of a traffic safety education program may pose a hardship, through a grant or other financial assistance program; and
- an assessment of approaches used by other states that require driver training by persons who are 18 years of age and older.

The classroom portion of instruction under a traditional driver training education course is clarified to include in-person instruction or virtual instruction with a live instructor, consistent with DOL rule. The classroom portion may also include self-paced, online components authorized and certified by DOL. DOL must publish on its website, by January 1, 2025, an interactive map of all driver training education course and traffic safety education program providers, including motorcyclist, commercial driver, or any other driving training and testing provider certified by DOL. The interactive map, at a minimum, must provide certain provider contact information, course and program pricing, and services offered by language. Such providers must report course and program pricing to DOL annually.

DOL may develop rules to establish alternative pathways to driver instructor licensure if such pathways enable an assessment of an applicant's fitness, knowledge, skills, and ability to teach the classroom and behind-the-wheel instruction portions of a driver training education program and if the behind-the-wheel instructor certification includes behind-the-wheel teaching methods and supervised practice.

The Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE) must develop a program to foster the development of women, minority-owned, and veteran-owned licensed driver training schools in the state, and provide an update on program implementation and administration to the transportation committees of the Legislature by October 1, 2024.

Intermediate Driver's License. Nighttime driving restrictions for intermediate license holders are modified to allow holders to operate a motor vehicle between the hours of 1:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. if accompanied by a licensed driver at least 25 years old, or for school, religious, or employment activities for the holder of their immediate family member.

Votes on Final Passage:

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| Senate | 41 | 7 | |
| House | 93 | 4 | (House amended) |
| Senate | 38 | 11 | (Senate concurred) |

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