

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6031

As of January 24, 2024

Title: An act relating to modifying the student transportation allocation to accommodate multiple vehicle types for transporting students.

Brief Description: Modifying the student transportation allocation to accommodate multiple vehicle types for transporting students.

Sponsors: Senators Braun, Dozier, Kuderer, Rivers and Schoesler.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/25/24.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides that the pupil transportation funding formula may not be construed to mandate the type of vehicle used for pupil transportation and encourages districts to use the vehicle type that the district deems to be the safest and most cost-effective.
- Requires district-owned cars to be included in the overall transportation allocation rather than being subject to a private reimbursement rate, and requires additional district-owned ridership data to be considered.
- Requires school districts to report the number of miles driven per vehicle type when reporting transportation data to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Alex Fairfortune (786-7416)

Background: Pupil Transportation Funding. The state's statutory program of basic education includes transportation to and from school for eligible students, including

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.

transportation of students for special education services and between schools and learning centers.

To provide transportation allocations to school districts the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) uses the Student Transportation Allocation Reporting System (STARS), which is a regression formula that uses prior year expenditures, student passenger counts, and district characteristics to calculate the expected costs of to and from transportation. The STARS formula result is then compared to the district's allowable transportation expenditures from the prior year. The school district receives the lesser of the two calculated amounts plus any compensation adjustments provided in the operating budget.

The transportation formula also provides an allocation for transporting students in district-owned passenger cars using the private vehicle reimbursement rate if a school district deems it advisable to use such vehicles after the school district board of directors has considered the safety of the students being transported and the economy of utilizing a car in lieu of a school bus. Students transported in district-owned passenger cars must be included in basic and special passenger counts.

The transportation distribution formula is for allocation purposes only and does not mandate specific levels of pupil transportation services by local districts.

Reporting Transportation Data. School districts must submit transportation reports to OSPI three times each year as a condition of receiving transportation funding. These reports must include the following data:

- the number of eligible students transported to and from school, along with identification of stop locations and school locations;
- the number of miles driven for pupil transportation services the previous school year; and
- other operational data and descriptions as required by OSPI to determine the allocation requirements for each school district.

Summary of Bill: The transportation distribution formula may not mandate the type of vehicle to be used for pupil transportation. School districts are encouraged to use the vehicle type deemed by the district to be the safest and most cost-effective manner of transporting its students, including using school buses and vans, and may use transportation allocations for this purpose.

District-owned passenger cars used in lieu of school buses must be included in the overall determination of the district's annual student transportation allocation rather than generating reimbursement at the private vehicle reimbursement rate.

Students transported in district-owned passenger cars must be included when calculating average distance to school and number of locations served. When reporting the number of

miles driven for pupil transportation services in the prior school year, school districts must disaggregate data by vehicle type.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 18, 2024.

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

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