

APPROVED

Review of Requirement for Unexpired Driver's License when Registering a Vehicle

The 2013-15 Transportation Budget (ESSB 5024, Section 204(2)) directs the Joint Transportation Committee to coordinate a Work Group "to identify possible issues relating to the administration of, compliance with, and enforcement of the statutory requirement for a person to provide an unexpired (Washington) driver's license when registering a vehicle". The Work Group is comprised of representatives from the Department of Licensing, Department of Revenue, county auditors or other agents, and vehicle license subagents. The Work Group will make recommendations on any needed modifications in administration and enforcement to address identified issues, including potential statutory changes. A final report will be presented to the House and Senate Transportation Committees by December 31, 2013.

Background

State law requires a person to register their vehicle and obtain a Washington State driver's license within 30 days of becoming a Washington State resident. Also, a person must present an unexpired Washington State driver's license to register a vehicle in Washington, except for specific instances. The requirement to present an unexpired driver's license was enacted in 2005 in response to evidence that some people were becoming residents of Washington and retaining their out of state driver's license (in most instances Oregon licenses). In some cases, people were keeping their Oregon driver's licenses though they were Washington residents, in order to avoid paying Washington sales or use taxes.

Legislation (HB 1521 and SB 5427) considered during the 2013 legislative session proposed removing the requirement to present an unexpired Washington driver's license in order to register a vehicle. The proposals also would have eliminated the fine for falsifying residency when registering a vehicle. This legislation was supported by the Washington Association of Vehicle Subagents who argued that the requirement for showing a valid driver's license is not workable. They said many customers do not meet the requirement, since they may be registering the vehicle for another person; that it slows the licensing process; and that vehicle licensing, not driver licensing, is their duty.

During House and Senate Transportation Committee hearings on the HB 1521 and SB 5427, questions were raised about the effectiveness of the current requirement, including how uniformly it is enforced. As a result, the JTC was directed to conduct this study.

Overall Study Approach

The study will be conducted by a Staff Group which will support the Work Group. The Work Group will meet up to three times to discuss issues and potential changes to the existing process and law.

Study Outline

Initially, the Staff Group will interview each of the Work Group members, to help to clarify state law and processes regarding vehicle licensing, processes at the county auditor level, and among subagents. These interviews will help identify any variations among the licensing processes and compliance for each of the licensing agent categories, and differences with in-person, mail-in, and on-line vehicle registration procedures. Other persons involved in the vehicle licensing process will also be interviewed.

The Work Group will then meet to identify issues relating to the administration of, compliance with, and enforcement of the law requiring a person to provide an unexpired driver's license when registering a vehicle. Alternatives to the current process will be identified and discussed. Between Work Group meetings, the Staff Group will continue evaluating issues raised. A third Work Group meeting may be convened, if needed, to further evaluate potential changes to the current process.

Proposed Time Line

June and July. Review materials including bills from the 2013 Session, and the 2005 legislation. Interview stakeholders including selected county auditors and subagents. Finalize appointments to the Work Group.

July. First Work Group meeting to discuss licensing processes, and concerns with current practices.

August. Follow-up and evaluation of issues raised at the first Work Group meeting.

September. Second Work Group meeting to discuss issues needing resolution and if needed, alternative approaches.

October. Update JTC and hold third Work Group meeting, if needed. Circulate draft report.

November. Develop draft final report. Report principle findings to JTC.

December. Present draft final report to JTC on December 12.

Staff Group Members

Gene Baxstrom, Project Manager, and Mary Fleckenstein	Joint Transportation Committee
Amanda Cecil	Senate Transportation Committee
Jerry Long and Amy Skei	House Transportation Committee
Jim Albert and Robin Rettew	Office of Financial Management

JTC Project Manager/Back-Up: Gene Baxstrom, Mary Fleckenstein
 Appropriation: Within existing funds
 Report due date: December 31, 2013