

Chapter 43.59 RCW
TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMISSION

Sections

- 43.59.010 Purpose—Finding.
- 43.59.020 Governor responsible for administration of traffic safety program—Acceptance and disbursal of federal funds.
- 43.59.030 Members of commission—Appointment—Vacancies—Governor's designee to act during governor's absence.
- 43.59.040 Powers and duties of commission.
- 43.59.050 Meetings—Travel expenses of members.
- 43.59.060 Director of commission—Appointment—Salary.
- 43.59.070 Director's duties—Staff—Rules and regulations.
- 43.59.080 Governor's duties as chair.
- 43.59.140 Driving while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or any drug—Information and education.
- 43.59.156 Cooper Jones active transportation safety council.
- 43.59.170 Child restraint systems in motor vehicles—Information and education.
- 43.59.180 Negligent driving with a vulnerable user victim—First degree—Information and education.

Victim impact panel registry: RCW 10.01.230.

RCW 43.59.010 Purpose—Finding. (1) The purpose of this chapter is to establish a new agency of state government to be known as the Washington traffic safety commission. The functions and purpose of this commission shall be to find solutions to the problems that have been created as a result of the tremendous increase of motor vehicles on our highways and the attendant traffic death and accident tolls; to plan and supervise programs for the prevention of accidents on streets and highways including but not limited to educational campaigns designed to reduce traffic accidents in cooperation with all official and unofficial organizations interested in traffic safety; to coordinate the activities at the state and local level in the development of statewide and local traffic safety programs; to promote a uniform enforcement of traffic safety laws and establish standards for investigation and reporting of traffic accidents; to promote and improve driver education; and to authorize the governor to perform all functions required to be performed by him or her under the federal Highway Safety Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-564; 80 Stat. 731).

(2) The legislature finds and declares that bicycling and walking are becoming increasingly popular in Washington as clean and efficient modes of transportation, as recreational activities, and as organized sports. Future plans for the state's transportation system will require increased access and safety for bicycles and pedestrians on our common roadways, and federal transportation legislation and funding programs have created strong incentives to implement these changes quickly. As a result, many more people are likely to take up bicycling in Washington both as a leisure activity and as a convenient, inexpensive form of transportation. Bicyclists are more vulnerable to injury and accident than motorists, and should be as knowledgeable as possible about traffic laws, be highly visible and predictable when riding in traffic, and be encouraged to wear bicycle

safety helmets. Hundreds of bicyclists and pedestrians are seriously injured every year in accidents, and millions of dollars are spent on health care costs associated with these accidents. There is clear evidence that organized training in the rules and techniques of safe and effective cycling can significantly reduce the incidence of serious injury and accidents, increase cooperation among road users, and significantly increase the incidence of bicycle helmet use, particularly among minors. A reduction in accidents benefits the entire community. Therefore it is appropriate for businesses and community organizations to provide donations to bicycle and pedestrian safety training programs. [2009 c 549 s 5141; 1998 c 165 s 2; 1967 ex.s. c 147 s 1.]

Short title—1998 c 165: "This act may be known and cited as the Cooper Jones Act." [1998 c 165 s 1.]

Driver education courses: Chapter 28A.220 RCW.

Drivers' training schools: Chapter 46.82 RCW.

RCW 43.59.020 Governor responsible for administration of traffic safety program—Acceptance and disbursal of federal funds. The governor shall be responsible for the administration of the traffic safety program of the state and shall be the official of the state having ultimate responsibility for dealing with the federal government with respect to all programs and activities of the state and local governments pursuant to the Highway Safety Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-564; 80 Stat. 731). The governor is authorized and empowered to accept and disburse federal grants or other funds or donations from any source for the purpose of improving traffic safety programs in the state of Washington, and is hereby empowered to contract and to do all other things necessary in behalf of this state to secure the full benefits available to this state under the federal Highway Safety Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-564; 80 Stat. 731) and in so doing, to cooperate with federal and state agencies, agencies private and public, interested organizations, and with individuals, to effectuate the purposes of that enactment, and any and all subsequent amendments thereto. [1967 ex.s. c 147 s 2.]

RCW 43.59.030 Members of commission—Appointment—Vacancies—Governor's designee to act during governor's absence. The governor shall be assisted in his or her duties and responsibilities by the Washington state traffic safety commission. The Washington traffic safety commission shall be composed of the governor as chair, the superintendent of public instruction, the director of licensing, the secretary of transportation, the chief of the state patrol, the secretary of health, the director of the health care authority, a representative of the association of Washington cities to be appointed by the governor, a member of the association of counties to be appointed by the governor, and a representative of the judiciary to be appointed by the governor. Appointments to any vacancies among appointee members shall be as in the case of original appointment.

The governor may designate an employee of the governor's office familiar with the traffic safety commission to act on behalf of the

governor during the absence of the governor at one or more of the meetings of the commission. The vote of the designee shall have the same effect as if cast by the governor if the designation is in writing and is presented to the person presiding at the meetings included within the designation.

The governor may designate a member, other than the governor's designee, to preside during the governor's absence. [2018 c 201 s 8010; 2016 c 206 s 2. Prior: 2009 c 549 s 5142; 1991 c 3 s 298; 1982 c 30 s 1; 1979 c 158 s 105; 1971 ex.s. c 85 s 7; 1969 ex.s. c 105 s 1; 1967 ex.s. c 147 s 3.]

Findings—Intent—Effective date—2018 c 201: See notes following RCW 41.05.018.

Codification correction—2016 c 206: "The 1982 codification of an amendment to RCW 43.59.030, concerning the designation and authority of the governor's designee to the traffic safety commission, incorrectly omitted two phrases that were included in chapter 30, Laws of 1982, as signed into law by governor John Spellman. Section 2 of this act restores the missing phrases." [2016 c 206 s 1.]

RCW 43.59.040 Powers and duties of commission. In addition to other responsibilities set forth in this chapter the commission shall:

- (1) Advise and confer with the governing authority of any political subdivision of the state deemed eligible under the federal Highway Safety Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-564; 80 Stat. 731) for participation in the aims and programs and purposes of that act;
- (2) Advise and confer with all agencies of state government whose programs and activities are within the scope of the Highway Safety Act including those agencies that are not subject to direct supervision, administration, and control by the governor under existing laws;
- (3) Succeed to and be vested with all powers, duties, and jurisdictions previously vested in the Washington state safety council;
- (4) Carry out such other responsibilities as may be consistent with this chapter. [1983 1st ex.s. c 14 s 1; 1967 ex.s. c 147 s 4.]

RCW 43.59.050 Meetings—Travel expenses of members. The commission shall meet at least quarterly and shall have such special meetings as may be required. Members of the commission shall receive no additional compensation for their services except that which shall be allowed as travel expenses in accordance with RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060 as now existing or hereafter amended. [1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 34 s 120; 1967 ex.s. c 147 s 6.]

Effective date—Severability—1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 34: See notes following RCW 2.08.115.

RCW 43.59.060 Director of commission—Appointment—Salary. The governor as chair of the commission shall appoint a person to be director of the Washington traffic safety commission which director shall be paid such salary as shall be deemed reasonable and shall

serve at the pleasure of the governor. [2009 c 549 s 5143; 1967 ex.s. c 147 s 7.]

RCW 43.59.070 Director's duties—Staff—Rules and regulations.

The director shall be secretary of the commission and shall be responsible for carrying into effect the commission's orders and rules and regulations promulgated by the commission. The director shall also be authorized to employ such staff as is necessary pursuant to the provisions of chapter 41.06 RCW. The commission shall adopt such rules and regulations as shall be necessary to carry into effect the purposes of this chapter. [1967 ex.s. c 147 s 8.]

RCW 43.59.080 Governor's duties as chair. The governor as chair of said commission shall have the authority to appoint advisory committees as he or she may deem advisable to aid, advise and assist the commission in carrying out the purposes of this chapter. All actions and decisions, however, shall be made by the commission. [2009 c 549 s 5144; 1967 ex.s. c 147 s 9.]

RCW 43.59.140 Driving while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or any drug—Information and education. The Washington traffic safety commission shall produce and disseminate through all possible media, informational and educational materials explaining the extent of the problems caused by drinking drivers, the need for public involvement in their solution, and the penalties of existing and new laws against driving while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or any drug. [1991 c 290 s 4; 1983 c 165 s 42.]

Legislative finding, intent—Effective dates—Severability—1983 c 165: See notes following RCW 46.20.308.

RCW 43.59.156 Cooper Jones active transportation safety council. (Effective until January 1, 2026.) (1) Within amounts appropriated to the traffic safety commission, the commission must convene the Cooper Jones active transportation safety council comprised of stakeholders who have a unique interest or expertise in the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorists.

(2) The purpose of the council is to review and analyze data and programs related to fatalities and serious injuries involving pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorists to identify points at which the transportation system can be improved including, whenever possible, privately owned areas of the system such as parking lots, and to identify patterns in pedestrian, bicyclist, and other nonmotorist fatalities and serious injuries. The council may also:

(a) Monitor progress on implementation of existing council recommendations; and

(b) Seek opportunities to expand consideration and implementation of the principles of systematic safety, including areas where data collection may need improvement.

(3) (a) The council may include, but is not limited to:

(i) A representative from the commission;

(ii) A coroner from the county in which pedestrian, bicyclist, or nonmotorist deaths have occurred;

(iii) Multiple members of law enforcement who have investigated pedestrian, bicyclist, or nonmotorist fatalities;

(iv) A traffic engineer;

(v) A representative from the department of transportation and a representative from the department of health;

(vi) A representative from the association of Washington cities;

(vii) A representative from the Washington state association of counties;

(viii) A representative from a pedestrian advocacy group;

(ix) A representative from a tribal government; and

(x) A representative from a bicyclist or other nonmotorist advocacy group.

(b) The commission may invite other representatives of stakeholder groups to participate in the council as deemed appropriate by the commission. Additionally, the commission may invite a victim or family member of a victim to participate in the council.

(4) The council must meet at least quarterly. By December 31st of each year, the council must issue an annual report detailing any findings and recommendations to the governor and the transportation committees of the legislature. The commission must provide the annual report electronically to all municipal governments and state agencies that participated in the council during that calendar year. Additionally, the council must report any budgetary or fiscal recommendations to the office of financial management and the legislature by August 1st on a biennial basis.

(5) As part of the review of pedestrian, bicyclist, or nonmotorist fatalities and serious injuries that occur in Washington, the council may review any available information, including crash information maintained in existing databases; statutes, rules, policies, or ordinances governing pedestrians and traffic related to the incidents; and any other relevant information. The council may make recommendations regarding changes in statutes, ordinances, rules, and policies that could improve pedestrian, bicyclist, or nonmotorist safety. Additionally, the council may make recommendations on how to improve traffic fatality and serious injury data quality, including crashes that occur in privately owned property such as parking lots. The council may consult with local cities and counties, as well as local police departments and other law enforcement agencies and associations representing those jurisdictions on how to improve data quality regarding crashes occurring on private property.

(6) (a) Documents prepared by or for the council are inadmissible and may not be used in a civil or administrative proceeding, except that any document that exists before its use or consideration in a review by the council, or that is created independently of such review, does not become inadmissible merely because it is reviewed or used by the council. For confidential information, such as personally identifiable information and medical records, which are obtained by the council, neither the commission nor the council may publicly disclose such confidential information. No person who was in attendance at a meeting of the council or who participated in the creation, retention, collection, or maintenance of information or documents specifically for the commission or the council shall be permitted to testify in any civil action as to the content of such proceedings or of the documents and information prepared specifically as part of the activities of the council. However, recommendations

from the council and the commission generally may be disclosed without personal identifiers.

(b) The council may review, only to the extent otherwise permitted by law or court rule when determined to be relevant and necessary: Any law enforcement incident documentation, such as incident reports, dispatch records, and victim, witness, and suspect statements; any supplemental reports, probable cause statements, and 911 call taker's reports; and any other information determined to be relevant to the review. The commission and the council must maintain the confidentiality of such information to the extent required by any applicable law.

(7) If acting in good faith, without malice, and within the parameters of and protocols established under this chapter, representatives of the commission and the council are immune from civil liability for an activity related to reviews of particular fatalities and serious injuries.

(8) This section must not be construed to provide a private civil cause of action.

(9)(a) The council may receive gifts, grants, or endowments from public or private sources that are made from time to time, in trust or otherwise, for the use and benefit of the purposes of the council and spend the gifts, grants, or endowments from the public or private sources according to their terms, unless the receipt of the gifts, grants, or endowments violates RCW 42.17A.560.

(b) Subject to the appropriation of funds for this specific purpose, the council may provide grants targeted at improving pedestrian, bicyclist, or nonmotorist safety in accordance with recommendations made by the council.

(10) For purposes of this section:

(a) "Bicyclist fatality" means any death of a bicyclist resulting from a collision, whether on a roadway, at an intersection, along an adjacent sidewalk, or on a path that is contiguous with a roadway.

(b) "Council" means the Cooper Jones active transportation safety council.

(c) "Nonmotorist" means anyone using the transportation system who is not in a vehicle.

(d) "Pedestrian fatality" means any death of a pedestrian resulting from a collision, whether on a roadway, at an intersection, along an adjacent sidewalk, or on a path that is contiguous with a roadway.

(e) "Serious injury" means any injury other than a fatal injury that prevents the injured person from walking, driving, or normally continuing the activities the person was capable of performing before the injury occurred. [2025 c 417 s 902; 2020 c 72 s 1.]

Expiration date—2025 c 417 ss 603 and 902: See note following RCW 36.70A.200.

Findings—Intent—2025 c 417: See note following RCW 82.38.030.

RCW 43.59.156 Cooper Jones active transportation safety council. (Effective January 1, 2026.) (1) Within amounts appropriated to the traffic safety commission, the commission must convene the Cooper Jones active transportation safety council comprised of stakeholders

who have a unique interest or expertise in the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorists.

(2) The purpose of the council is to review and analyze data and programs related to fatalities and serious injuries involving pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorists to identify points at which the transportation system can be improved including, whenever possible, privately owned areas of the system such as parking lots, and to identify patterns in pedestrian, bicyclist, and other nonmotorist fatalities and serious injuries. The council may also:

(a) Monitor progress on implementation of existing council recommendations; and

(b) Seek opportunities to expand consideration and implementation of the principles of systematic safety, including areas where data collection may need improvement.

(3) (a) The council may include, but is not limited to:

(i) A representative from the commission;

(ii) A coroner from the county in which pedestrian, bicyclist, or nonmotorist deaths have occurred;

(iii) Multiple members of law enforcement who have investigated pedestrian, bicyclist, or nonmotorist fatalities;

(iv) A traffic engineer;

(v) A representative from the department of transportation and a representative from the department of health;

(vi) A representative from the association of Washington cities;

(vii) A representative from the Washington state association of counties;

(viii) A representative from a pedestrian advocacy group;

(ix) A representative from a tribal government; and

(x) A representative from a bicyclist or other nonmotorist advocacy group.

(b) The commission may invite other representatives of stakeholder groups to participate in the council as deemed appropriate by the commission. Additionally, the commission may invite a victim or family member of a victim to participate in the council.

(4) The council must meet at least quarterly. By December 31st of each year, the council must issue an annual report detailing any findings and recommendations to the governor and the transportation committees of the legislature. The commission must provide the annual report electronically to all municipal governments and state agencies that participated in the council during that calendar year. Additionally, the council must report any budgetary or fiscal recommendations to the office of financial management and the legislature by August 1st on a biennial basis.

(5) As part of the review of pedestrian, bicyclist, or nonmotorist fatalities and serious injuries that occur in Washington, the council may review any available information, including crash information maintained in existing databases; statutes, rules, policies, or ordinances governing pedestrians and traffic related to the incidents; and any other relevant information. The council may make recommendations regarding changes in statutes, ordinances, rules, and policies that could improve pedestrian, bicyclist, or nonmotorist safety. Additionally, the council may make recommendations on how to improve traffic fatality and serious injury data quality, including crashes that occur in privately owned property such as parking lots. The council may consult with local cities and counties, as well as local police departments and other law enforcement agencies and

associations representing those jurisdictions on how to improve data quality regarding crashes occurring on private property.

(6) (a) Documents prepared by or for the council are inadmissible and may not be used in a civil or administrative proceeding, except that any document that exists before its use or consideration in a review by the council, or that is created independently of such review, does not become inadmissible merely because it is reviewed or used by the council. For confidential information, such as personally identifiable information and medical records, which are obtained by the council, neither the commission nor the council may publicly disclose such confidential information. No person who was in attendance at a meeting of the council or who participated in the creation, retention, collection, or maintenance of information or documents specifically for the commission or the council shall be permitted to testify in any civil action as to the content of such proceedings or of the documents and information prepared specifically as part of the activities of the council. However, recommendations from the council and the commission generally may be disclosed without personal identifiers.

(b) The council may review, only to the extent otherwise permitted by law or court rule when determined to be relevant and necessary: Any law enforcement incident documentation, such as incident reports, dispatch records, and victim, witness, and suspect statements; any supplemental reports, probable cause statements, and 911 call taker's reports; and any other information determined to be relevant to the review. The commission and the council must maintain the confidentiality of such information to the extent required by any applicable law.

(7) If acting in good faith, without malice, and within the parameters of and protocols established under this chapter, representatives of the commission and the council are immune from civil liability for an activity related to reviews of particular fatalities and serious injuries.

(8) This section must not be construed to provide a private civil cause of action.

(9) (a) The council may receive gifts, grants, or endowments from public or private sources that are made from time to time, in trust or otherwise, for the use and benefit of the purposes of the council and spend the gifts, grants, or endowments from the public or private sources according to their terms, unless the receipt of the gifts, grants, or endowments violates RCW 29B.45.020.

(b) Subject to the appropriation of funds for this specific purpose, the council may provide grants targeted at improving pedestrian, bicyclist, or nonmotorist safety in accordance with recommendations made by the council.

(10) For purposes of this section:

(a) "Bicyclist fatality" means any death of a bicyclist resulting from a collision, whether on a roadway, at an intersection, along an adjacent sidewalk, or on a path that is contiguous with a roadway.

(b) "Council" means the Cooper Jones active transportation safety council.

(c) "Nonmotorist" means anyone using the transportation system who is not in a vehicle.

(d) "Pedestrian fatality" means any death of a pedestrian resulting from a collision, whether on a roadway, at an intersection, along an adjacent sidewalk, or on a path that is contiguous with a roadway.

(e) "Serious injury" means any injury other than a fatal injury that prevents the injured person from walking, driving, or normally continuing the activities the person was capable of performing before the injury occurred. [2025 c 417 s 903; 2024 c 164 s 523; 2020 c 72 s 1.]

Effective date—2025 c 417 ss 104, 105, 107-110, 201-206, 301-303, 604, and 903: See note following RCW 46.17.355.

Findings—Intent—2025 c 417: See note following RCW 82.38.030.

Intent—Construction—Rules remain valid—Effective date—2024 c 164: See notes following RCW 29B.10.010.

RCW 43.59.170 Child restraint systems in motor vehicles—Information and education. (1) The Washington traffic safety commission shall produce and disseminate informational and educational materials explaining the proper use of child restraint systems in motor vehicles, the safety risks of not properly using child restraint systems in motor vehicles, where assistance on the proper installation and use of child restraint systems in motor vehicles can be obtained, and the legal penalties for not properly using child restraint systems in motor vehicles.

(2) As used in this section, "child restraint system" has the same meaning as defined in RCW 46.61.687(6). [2019 c 59 s 2.]

Effective date—2019 c 59: See note following RCW 46.61.687.

RCW 43.59.180 Negligent driving with a vulnerable user victim—First degree—Information and education. Subject to funds appropriated for this purpose, the Washington traffic safety commission shall produce and disseminate through all possible media, informational and educational materials explaining the penalties of the crime of negligent driving with a vulnerable user victim in the first degree. [2023 c 471 s 11.]

Effective date—2023 c 471: See note following RCW 46.61.5259.