

CHAPTER 24
[Engrossed House Bill No. 273]
HIGHWAYS--
CONSTRUCTION--
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

AN ACT Relating to state highways; providing environmental impact reports on the construction thereof; and creating new sections.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. Section 1. It is declared to be the public policy of the state of Washington that in the location, design and construction of state highways, every effort shall be made to minimize and eliminate effects which are adverse to the natural and human environment of the state. Such factors as the dislocation of people, the dislocation of residences, the dislocation of businesses and the creation of air and water pollution situations shall be considered when constructing state highways. Therefore, the purposes of this act are:

(1) To declare a state policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment;

(2) To promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of the citizens of this state; and

(3) To enrich the understanding of ecological systems and natural resources important to the state; and

(4) To provide an efficient highway network serving the commercial, recreational and personal needs of the people of this state.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. Whenever the department of highways determines that a state highway project will significantly affect the quality of human environment, and in every case when a state highway is to be constructed in a new location or a state highway reconstruction project will require additional right of way, the department of highways, prior to holding the first public hearing relating to the location or design of the highway, shall prepare a report on the environmental impact which may reasonably be expected to occur as a result of such constructions: PROVIDED, That if in respect to any project on which one or more hearings have occurred prior to the effective date of this act, the department of highways shall prepare the environmental report prior to conducting the next public hearing.

The environmental report shall consider:

(1) The environmental impact of the highway including its effect on the quality of the air and water and the effect on existing residential and business developments;

(2) Any adverse environmental effects which cannot be avoided as a result of the construction of the highway;

(3) Alternatives to the proposed project;

(4) The relationship between local short term uses of man's environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long term productivity; and

(5) Any irreversible and irretrievable commitments or resources which would be involved in the proposed project.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 3. The environmental impact report shall be transmitted to the director of the department of ecology not less than thirty days prior to the public hearing or next public hearing as provided in section 2 of this act. The director of the department of ecology shall prepare a written environmental review statement on the project which shall contain a statement of any environmental problems and adverse environmental impact, natural or human, which he believes may reasonably be expected to occur as a result of the project. The environmental review statement shall also contain a statement of any beneficial environmental impact or any amenities either natural or human which may reasonably be expected to occur as a result of the project: PROVIDED, That if the director of the department of ecology determines that the project will have no significant environmental impact, his written statement to that effect shall constitute a review statement.

The director of the department of ecology shall transmit copies of the review statement to the department of highways, to any interested citizens, and to representatives of the news media in the area in which the proposed or existing highway is located not less than five days prior to the public hearing or next public hearing referred to in section 2 of this act.

Passed the House March 12, 1971.

Passed the Senate April 1, 1971.

Approved by the Governor April 9, 1971.

Filed in Office of Secretary of State April 9, 1971.