



Washington State Patrol

VEHICLE REGISTRATION COMPLIANCE PILOT PROGRAM

Puget Sound Region Status Report and Statewide Expansion Plan



LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENT

Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5161 (ESSB 5161), Section 207(2), provides **\$250,000** from the State Patrol Highway Account—State appropriation solely for the implementation of a vehicle registration compliance pilot program in the Puget Sound region.

The statute directs that:

- The pilot program must emphasize compliance with annual vehicle registration requirements.
- By February 15, 2026, the Washington State Patrol (WSP) must provide a status report on pilot program implementation.
- WSP must provide information on the funding needed and a preliminary plan for statewide implementation of activities related to ensuring compliance with annual vehicle registration requirements.

PURPOSE

The Legislature's appropriation supports the establishment of a structured vehicle registration compliance program designed to:

- Improve compliance with annual vehicle registration laws
- Enhance roadway safety
- Protect transportation-related funding
- Ensure enforcement is predictable, measurable, and equitable

Vehicle registration compliance supports state and local transportation systems funded through registration fees.

WSP's pilot program advances these goals through targeted, high-visibility emphasis patrol activity in the Puget Sound region.

Public Safety and Mission Alignment

Vehicle registration compliance supports roadway safety and accountability by ensuring vehicles operating on Washington roadways are properly documented and in compliance with state law.

WSP's emphasis patrol approach is designed to promote voluntary compliance with annual registration requirements while maintaining transparency, equity, and constitutional policing standards. The pilot program is structured as a limited, high-visibility compliance effort consistent with WSP's mission to enhance roadway safety and support the lawful operation of vehicles statewide.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND PRELIMINARY OUTCOMES

WSP has initiated and begun implementation of the legislatively authorized vehicle registration compliance pilot program in the Puget Sound region.

The pilot emphasizes compliance with annual vehicle registration requirements through structured emphasis patrol deployments focused specifically on observable registration violations, including:

- Expired vehicle registration tabs
- Missing or improper registration validation
- Registration violations identified through lawful enforcement activity

All pilot activity is initiated for observable registration violations and conducted in alignment with legislative direction and WSP policy.

Pilot Activity to Date

Between October 2025 and February 2026, WSP conducted **54** targeted emphasis deployments as part of the legislatively authorized vehicle registration compliance pilot program in the Puget Sound region.

During these emphasis periods, WSP:

- Initiated **1,267** registration-related stops
- Issued **1,176** citations for confirmed registration violations

Of the **1,267** Washington-registered vehicles contacted during pilot emphasis activity, **774** have subsequently renewed and now have valid registration tabs, representing approximately **61 percent** returning to compliance as of this reporting period.

These structured emphasis deployments demonstrate a measurable and sustainable framework for improving annual vehicle registration compliance while supporting transparency and legislative oversight.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND REPORTING FRAMEWORK

WSP is tracking pilot performance through measurable compliance indicators, including enforcement activity, compliance outcomes, staffing utilization, and geographic deployment patterns.

Pilot activity totals and compliance outcomes to date are provided in the Program Implementation and Preliminary Outcomes section of this report. Additional operational data will inform evaluation of pilot effectiveness and future statewide implementation planning.

PRELIMINARY STATEWIDE EXPANSION FRAMEWORK (FY 2027)

ESSB 5161 also requires WSP to provide information on the funding needed and a preliminary plan for statewide implementation of activities related to ensuring compliance with annual vehicle registration requirements.

Based on pilot implementation progress, WSP has developed a scalable statewide compliance framework built on structured emphasis patrol deployments.

Key elements of a potential statewide model include:

- Predictable, recurring enforcement emphasis periods
- Overtime-based staffing to ensure fiscal discipline
- Centralized oversight with district-level flexibility
- Structured reporting and accountability mechanisms
- Compliance-oriented enforcement focused on observable violations

A statewide model would allow consistent enforcement expectations across jurisdictions while maintaining district-level operational flexibility.

STATEWIDE FUNDING ESTIMATE

WSP's preliminary statewide estimate is based on a structured emphasis patrol model across WSP Districts 1 through 8 with the following assumptions:

- Two emphasis patrol deployments per month, per district
- Each emphasis deployment staffed by two troopers
- Six-hour enforcement event plus three hours of follow-up activity per event

Based on these staffing and deployment assumptions across all districts, the estimated annual statewide cost for emphasis patrol activity is approximately \$500,000.

This estimate is preliminary and will be refined through FY 2026 pilot expenditure data and coordination with agency budget staff as statewide implementation options are further evaluated.

EQUITY AND COMPLIANCE SAFEGUARDS

WSP's vehicle registration compliance efforts incorporate safeguards to ensure equitable and lawful enforcement, including:

- Stops limited strictly to observable registration violations
- Supervisory review of emphasis patrol activity
- Monitoring of enforcement data to identify potential geographic or demographic disparities
- Alignment with WSP bias-free policing policies and training

This framework ensures compliance efforts remain consistent, constitutional, and defensible.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The Puget Sound vehicle registration compliance pilot program is underway and has produced measurable compliance outcomes consistent with legislative direction.

WSP will continue pilot operations through FY 2026 and refine activity, expenditure, and compliance data to inform legislative consideration of potential statewide implementation in the 2027–29 biennium.