
Transportation Committee

HB 2527

Brief Description: Authorizing toll-free operation of the Puget Island ferry during emergency bridge closures.

Sponsors: Representatives Wallace, Blake and Hatfield; by request of Department of Transportation.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes toll-free operation of the Puget Island ferry during emergency closures of either the Astoria-Meglar bridge or the Longview-Rainier bridge.

Hearing Date: 1/27/04

Staff: Page Scott (786-7301).

Background:

The Puget Island – Westport ferry is operated by Wahkiakum County. The ferry provides an alternate Columbia River crossing between the Astoria-Meglar bridge to the west and the Longview-Rainier bridge to the east. Ferry rates range from \$3 for passenger cars and pickups to \$0.50 for foot passengers. Rates for large trucks and motor homes vary depending on length.

Wahkiakum County has requested that the ferry be operated on a toll free basis during emergent conditions that close either the Astoria-Meglar or Longview-Rainier bridges. Emergent conditions requiring closure include bomb threats or emergency inspections.

RCW 47.56.720(4) currently provides for toll free operation of the Puget Island-Westport ferry when state route 4 is closed. The Department of Transportation has received appropriations to reimburse Wahkiakum County for up to 80 percent of the Puget Island ferry-operating deficit and 100 percent reimbursement for ferry maintenance and operation during State Route 4 closures.

Summary of Bill:

The bill adds the circumstance of emergency closure of either the Astoria-Meglar bridge or the Longview-Rainier bridge as conditions for toll free operation of the Puget Island ferry.

There is no additional funding requested.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.