HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2151

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to high capacity transportation systems.

Brief Description: Revising provisions relating to high capacity transportation systems.

Sponsor(s): By House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives R. Fisher, G. Fisher, Forner, Mitchell, Prentice, Prince, Paris, Hine, Wood and Horn).

Brief History:
Reported by House Committee on:
Transportation, March 9, 1991, DPS;
Passed House, March 19, 1991, 97-1;
Amended by Senate.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: *That Substitute House Bill No. 2151 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.* Signed by 27 members: Representatives R. Fisher, Chair; R. Meyers, Vice Chair; Betrozoff, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Basich; Brough; Cantwell; Cooper; Day; G. Fisher; Forner; Haugen; Heavey; Horn; P. Johnson; R. Johnson; Jones; Kremen; Mitchell; Nelson; Orr; Prentice; Prince; Schmidt; Wilson; Wood; and Zellinsky.

Staff: Gene Baxstrom (786-7303).

Background: State law enacted in 1990 made transit systems responsible for high capacity transportation (HCT) system planning, implementation, and operation. A high capacity transportation system is defined as a "system of transportation services operating principally on exclusive rights of way, which taken as a whole, provides a substantially higher level of passenger capacity, speed, and service frequency than traditional public transportation systems operating principally on general purpose roadway rights of way."

An institutional process for evaluation of HCT systems is prescribed, one for the central Puget Sound area and another

for other areas of the state. A HCT planning process is specified for evaluation of a range of transportation options to address capacity needs.

System planning is to examine transportation goals and projected land use and travel patterns, but does not select a specified mode to address those needs. Detailed planning is the examination of a range of options including do nothing, low capital and high capital. It includes option development, cost and ridership estimates, and environmental impact statement preparation. The process is also to follow the Urban Mass Transit Administration's Alternative Analysis (AA) process to qualify for federal funds.

Planning under this process is reviewed by a 10-member expert review panel appointed jointly by the governor, the secretary of transportation, and the chair of the Legislative Transportation Committee. These experts are to review the reasonableness of cost estimates, ridership forecasts, and other planning assumptions and provide reports to the appointers and the transit agency conducting the planning. An expert review panel has been reviewing the central Puget Sound HCT planning effort for the past 15 months.

In King, Pierce, Snohomish, Thurston, Clark and Spokane counties, transit systems are authorized local option taxes to fund HCT systems. These voter-approved taxes consist of an up-to-1 percent sales tax, a 0.8 percent motor vehicle excise tax (MVET) and a $2/month employer tax. MVET rates must be uniform within all counties which are a party to an HCT agreement.

Before any system may impose these taxes for HCT, it must comply with the prescribed planning requirements, including expert panel review.

Summary of Bill: The definition of high capacity transportation (HCT) system is expanded to include supporting services to an HCT system, including high occupancy vehicle lanes.

A distinction is drawn between an HCT system and project planning. A high capacity implementation program is delineated to include a system plan, project plan, and a financing plan. System planning is the detailed evaluation of a range of options, organization and management, and analysis of methods for estimating costs, forecasting ridership and a financial plan.

Project planning is detailed identification of alignments, station locations, equipment and systems, construction schedules, costs and environmental effects.

The expert review panel (ERP) is to oversee the system planning effort rather than the entire project.

The requirement that all planning must be completed before taxes may be imposed is removed, and voter approval for HCT system funding may occur after system planning is complete.

Funding from one or more of the authorized local option tax sources may be sought through a single ballot proposition. Voter information requirements, including preparation of a voters pamphlet for the ballot proposition, are set forth. The requirement that motor vehicle excise tax (MVET) rates must be uniform in all counties within a system is repealed.

Language linking land use and HCT development is strengthened, including favoring local jurisdictions with supportive land uses. Language is modified to include objectives and terminology used in the 1990 Growth Management Act.

Technical clean-up of statutes is provided. Contingency language regarding the failure of the central Puget Sound transit agencies to form a joint planning effort or the failure of a ballot proposition is repealed.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S): What issues must be addressed in the high capacity transportation system plan which is to be submitted to voters for funding such a system are more specifically detailed. Elements specified include service provisions; identification of high occupancy vehicle lanes; route alignments and stations; patronage forecasts; financing including investment phasing, cost-effectiveness, and farebox recovery; environmental impacts; land use and community impacts; and system mobility characteristics.

It is clarified that the system planning must be completed prior to a funding proposal for such a system being placed on the ballot. Language changes are made consistent with other legislation previously adopted by committee (SHB 1677); and technical, except for extension of high capacity tax options to transit systems in Kitsap and Yakima counties.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The voters will be allowed to address an area wide high capacity systems plan rather than all the detail of numerous project plans. It will provide for an earlier vote on a high capacity system and will allow that system to address high occupancy vehicle lanes and supporting bus services.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Paul Kraabel, Seattle City Council; Greg Nichols, King County Council; Fred Jarrett, Mercer Island City Council; Caroline Feiss, Sno-Tran; and Tom Stenger, Tacoma City Council/Pierce County Transit.

VOTE ON FINAL PASSAGE:

Yeas 97; Nays 1

Nays: Representative Wineberry