

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2151

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION, APRIL 3, 1991

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

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

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION**

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Patterson, Chairman; Nelson, Vice Chairman; von Reichbauer, Vice Chairman; Conner, Erwin, Madsen, Oke, Skratek, Snyder, Thorsness, and Vognild.

**Staff:** Gene Baxstrom (786-7303)

**Hearing Dates:** April 1, 1991; April 3, 1991

**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:**

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.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** none requested

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED SENATE AMENDMENT:**

More specifically details what issues must be addressed in the high capacity transportation system plan which is to be submitted to voters for funding such a system. 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); technical, except for extension of high capacity tax options to transit systems in Kitsap and Yakima Counties.

**TESTIMONY FOR:**

Expanded definition would permit development of high occupancy vehicle lanes and supportive systems. System level planning is the appropriate information level for voters to decide whether to fund a high capacity system. Allowance for tax options to be addressed on one ballot and the removal of the requirement that the MVET be equal in adjacent counties would provide more funding flexibility.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST:** None

**TESTIFIED:** Paul Kraabel, Seattle City Council; Penny Peabody, METRO; Caroline Feiss, SNO-TRAN; Jim Toohey, Department of Transportation