

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 1177

As Passed House
March 11, 1993

Title: An act relating to wildlife enhancement projects.

Brief Description: Requiring an evaluation of the potential for wildlife enhancement projects on state rights of way.

Sponsors: Representatives Jacobsen, R. Fisher, Dunshee, King, Johanson, R. Meyers, J. Kohl, Springer and Orr.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Transportation, February 10, 1993, DP;
Passed House, March 11, 1993, 64-34.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 15 members:
Representatives R. Fisher, Chair; Brown, Vice Chair; Eide;
Heavey; Johanson; J. Kohl; R. Meyers; Miller; H. Myers; Orr;
Patterson; Quall; Shin; Wood; and Zellinsky.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 9 members:
Representatives Mielke, Assistant Ranking Minority Member;
Brough; Brumsickle; Finkbeiner; Forner; Fuhrman; Hansen;
Horn; and Sheldon.

Staff: Jeff Doyle (786-7322).

Background: The Department of Transportation (DOT) currently has no program to encourage wildlife habitat along DOT-managed rights of way. The DOT employs a biologist within the highway maintenance office, but primarily for technical assistance on mitigation projects.

At least one other state has begun to construct "bird houses" along state-owned rights of way, primarily behind billboards. Early observations from the project indicate an increase in the bird population in that area.

A private organization has constructed and installed one bird house along a DOT right of way (Interstate 90) near Cle Elum.

Summary of Bill: The Department of Transportation (DOT) is directed to evaluate the potential for wildlife enhancement projects along three state rights of way, with particular emphasis on raptor habitat (birds). The DOT must report back to the Legislature by December 1, 1993, on locations for potential projects, types of projects, and the cost of implementing projects.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The bird boxes have been installed in other states along highways, and the bird population has increased in those areas.

The cost of installing bird boxes is minimal, since they are attached to existing state highway signs. In many instances the construction and installation of the boxes is done by private organizations such as girl scouts or boy scouts.

The bill does not require the Department of Transportation to install any bird boxes; it only asks the department to explore the feasibility of the idea and estimate the cost.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Representative Ken Jacobsen; Bud Anderson, wildlife specialist; and Peggy Gaynor, landscape architect.