

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6466

As Reported By House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to environmental processes for the department of transportation.

Brief Description: Streamlining the environmental permit processes for the department of transportation.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Prentice, Nelson, Vognild, Hochstatter, Drew, Loveland, Sheldon, Schow, Williams, Erwin and Winsley).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Transportation, February 23, 1994, DPA.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 26 members: Representatives R. Fisher, Chair; Brown, Vice Chair; Jones, Vice Chair; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Mielke, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Backlund; Brough; Brumsickle; Cothorn; Eide; Finkbeiner; Forner; Fuhrman; Hansen; Heavey; Horn; Johanson; J. Kohl; Orr; Patterson; Quall; Romero; Sheldon; Shin; Wood and Zellinsky.

Staff: Jennifer Joly (786-7305).

Background: A number of planning and programming efforts are required to complete a transportation project. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) develops a 20-year transportation plan which lays the foundation for the specific projects approved within a given biennial period.

The WSDOT is comprised of six regional transportation districts and a headquarters office. Projects proposed for consideration within the biennial period are first "scoped" by the transportation districts. The districts are responsible for assessing the transportation problems within their respective jurisdictions and submitting candidate projects to the headquarters office, where all projects are then prioritized under RCW 47.05. The criteria used for

prioritizing projects are developed internally by WSDOT subject to approval by the Transportation Commission.

Once the projects have been prioritized and approved by the Transportation Commission, they are submitted to the Legislature for appropriation.

Currently, no formal environmental process links the planning, scoping, design and construction stages of project development.

Duplicative language exists regarding the requirements for the statewide multimodal transportation plan in RCW 47.01.290 and RCW 47.06.110.

Summary of Amended Bill: Internal WSDOT processes incorporate environmental considerations throughout the entire construction process, beginning with the earliest planning stages and extending through final construction.

The department, in cooperation with environmental regulatory authorities, shall identify and document environmental resources in the development of the statewide multimodal plan. The environmental regulatory authorities shall be given an opportunity to review the department's environmental plans.

Any changes to the criteria used for prioritizing projects under RCW 47.05 shall be subject to public comment prior to final adoption by the Transportation Commission.

The WSDOT, in cooperation with environmental regulatory authorities, shall identify potential environmental impacts, mitigation, and costs during the scoping phase, to be incorporated into the project prospectus. The project prospectus is to be submitted to the relevant environmental regulatory authorities. The department shall maintain a record of comments, and proposed revisions received from the reviewing regulatory authorities.

The WSDOT shall work with the relevant environmental regulatory authorities during the design alternative analysis process and seek written concurrence that those authorities agree with the preferred design alternative selected.

The department, in cooperation with the relevant environmental regulatory authorities, shall develop a uniform methodology for submitting plans and specifications to the environmental regulatory authorities which detail those project elements that impact environmental resources, and propose mitigation measures.

The WSDOT shall screen construction projects to determine which projects will require complex or multiple permits. The permitting authorities shall develop methods for initiating review of the permit applications for such projects prior to the final design of such projects.

The department shall conduct special prebid meetings for those projects deemed to be environmentally complex. Additionally, environmental considerations related to particular projects shall be reviewed during the preconstruction meeting held with the contractor receiving the bid award.

By December 31, 1994, counties planning under the Growth Management Act are to establish a collaborative process to review and coordinate state and local permits for all transportation projects that cross more than one city or county boundary. A mechanism is to be established among affected cities and counties to designate a permit coordinating agency to facilitate multijurisdictional review and approval.

Duplicative language regarding the requirements for the statewide multimodal transportation plan in RCW 47.01.290 is stricken.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: Local government coordination of permit approvals for major transportation projects crossing more than one city or county boundary is required.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: This legislation incorporates many of the ideas and recommendations of the Interagency Task Force on the Environment and Transportation, the WSDOT-sponsored workshops pertaining to environmental permitting, and the Legislative Transportation Committee's interim subcommittee on siting and environmental issues. Early environmental planning and WSDOT interaction with environmental permitting authorities will promote quicker delivery of transportation projects.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: David Stevens, Department of Transportation; Curt Eschels, Washington Association of Counties; and Vallana Piccolo, Puget Sound Water Quality Authority.