

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 6491

As Passed House
March 2, 1994

Title: An act relating to regional transit authority propositions.

Brief Description: Clarifying authority of regional transit authorities.

Sponsors: Senators Vognild and Nelson.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Transportation, February 22, 1994, DP.
Passed House, March 2, 1994, 96-0.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 24 members:
Representatives R. Fisher, Chair; Brown, Vice Chair; Jones, Vice Chair; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Mielke, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Backlund; Brumsickle; Cothorn; Eide; Finkbeiner; Forner; Fuhrman; Hansen; Heavey; Horn; Johanson; J. Kohl; Orr; Quall; Romero; Sheldon; Shin; Wood and Zellinsky.

Staff: Gene Baxstrom (786-7303).

Background: The King, Pierce and Snohomish County Councils voted in 1993 to establish the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (RTA). The RTA is vested with high capacity transportation system development in the three-county area, including the imposition of voter-approved taxes for development and operation of such transportation systems.

The RTA is now reviewing the regional transit plan developed by the Joint Regional Policy Committee, which consisted of local elected officials serving on the transit boards within the area. The plan formed the basis for each county's decision to tentatively join the RTA. However, each county can reverse its decision to participate, based on the system plan adopted by the RTA. Major changes in the plan require approval of two-thirds of board members.

State law requires that when the system plan is developed, it, along with taxes to fund such a plan, must have voter approval. It is not clear whether the RTA can propose to the voters an incremental plan, with subsequent votes on additional plan elements and additional taxes. The RTA is currently assessing a plan which provides an incremental approach to system development.

Summary of Bill: The Regional Transit Authority is specifically authorized to place before the voters the implementation of appropriate phases of a regional high capacity transportation system plan, with subsequent votes on additional phases. The authority must adopt a plan prior to a public vote; however, the requirement that voters approve the entire plan is deleted. The authority must identify projects to be funded by each ballot proposition.

Language is clarified that counties may opt not to participate in the authority prior to the first ballot proposition for implementation of the first phase of the plan.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The regional transit plan can be considered by the voters in phases. Because the ballot issue addresses specific projects, the voters have a greater likelihood of seeing the benefits of what they are voting on.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Aubrey Davis, Transportation Commission; and Jim Metcalf, Regional Transit Authority.