

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**SB 5572**

**AS PASSED SENATE, MARCH 13, 1993**

**Brief Description:** Assessing environmental costs of transportation projects.

**SPONSORS:** Senators Prentice, Vognild, Prince, Hargrove, Barr, McAuliffe, Haugen, Snyder, Pelz, Loveland, Sheldon, Moore, Erwin, Fraser, M. Rasmussen and Wojahn

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION**

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Vognild, Chairman; Loveland, Vice Chairman; Skratek, Vice Chairman; Barr, Drew, Haugen, Nelson, Oke, Prentice, Prince, M. Rasmussen, Sheldon, von Reichbauer, and Winsley.

**Staff:** Robin Rettew (786-7306)

**Hearing Dates:** February 22, 1993; March 3, 1993

**BACKGROUND:**

The Department of Transportation does not generally track environmental costs related to construction projects. Examples of such costs include, but are not limited to, wetland mitigation, habitat protection, removal of fish passage barriers, design, construction, and maintenance of stormwater facilities, disposal of hazardous wastes, etc.

Without knowing what these costs are, it is difficult to provide accurate project cost estimates. For example, category C project cost estimates increased 20 percent between May 1990 and June 1991, in large part because of unforeseen environmental impacts.

One of the most significant sources of construction cost increases is related to the delays associated with permitting. Although these delays are not precisely tracked today, the Department of Transportation estimates that it takes twice as long today to obtain permits than it did two years ago. The associated inflation cost of these delays is approximately \$13 million per year.

Without knowing how much is spent for the environmental components of construction projects, it is difficult to assess the costs and benefits of providing transportation facilities and services.

**SUMMARY:**

The Department of Transportation is authorized to undertake a pilot program to assess the costs of environmental elements of a representative sampling of transportation projects in at least one transportation district. The department will also track the cost impacts resulting from delays associated with permitting requirements.

The department is directed to expand their current scoping process used for the representative sampling of projects, to include detailed environmental analysis and preliminary design. Following these efforts, the department must then present project-specific recommendations and cost estimates to the Transportation Commission before approval is granted by the Transportation Commission for actual construction.

Based upon the findings of the pilot program the Transportation Commission is directed to recommend policies to the Legislative Transportation Committee regarding: (1) the current practice of appropriating design and construction dollars simultaneously; (2) identification of reasonable thresholds for environmental costs; (3) budget and accounting modifications that may be warranted in order to accurately capture environmental costs associated with transportation projects; and (4) modifications to the priority array statutes.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** requested

**TESTIMONY FOR:**

Using a sample of projects will be helpful in determining the environmental cost components of projects. This information will provide a sound basis for future policy development.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST:** None

**TESTIFIED:** Skip Burch, WSDOT