

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6249

AS PASSED SENATE, FEBRUARY 15, 1994

Brief Description: Concerning railroad crossing protective devices and their cost of maintenance.

SPONSORS: Senator Vognild; by request of Utilities & Transportation Commission

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Vognild, Chairman; Loveland, Vice Chairman; Skratek, Vice Chairman; Drew, Haugen, Morton, Nelson, Oke, Prentice, Prince, M. Rasmussen, Schow, Sellar, Sheldon and Winsley.

Staff: Brian McMorrow (786-7304)

Hearing Dates: February 2, 1994; February 4, 1994

BACKGROUND:

The Grade Crossing Protective Fund (GCPF) was created in 1969 to facilitate installation of automatic signals at hazardous highway and railroad crossings. Funding from the GCPF was available for both installation and annual maintenance of signals.

In 1982 the Legislature revised the statutes governing use of the GCPF. It was determined that federal funds were available for virtually all potential projects in the state and use of the GCPF as a direct funding source was needless duplication. The fund is now used for two purposes: (1) channeling money to local governments to match funds for federal projects; and (2) subsidizing annual railroad expenses associated with maintaining signals installed with GCPF funds in the past.

SUMMARY:

Payments made to the railroad companies for the annual maintenance of automatic railroad crossing signals are eliminated.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR:

The elimination of payments to the railroads would help the Utilities and Transportation Commission meet the Governor's request for a 2 percent budget reduction without reducing FTEs.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

The railroads do not object to the increase in their financial responsibility for the railroad crossing maintenance that this bill would require they assume. Instead, the railroads object to the manner in which this decision was reached; the railroads were not consulted about this bill.

TESTIFIED: Alan Scott, WUTC (pro); Gerry O'Keefe, OFM/WUTC (pro); Pat Halstead, Burlington Northern/Union Pacific (con)