

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6466

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION, FEBRUARY 1, 1994

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

SPONSORS: Senators Prentice, Nelson, Vognild, Hochstatter, Drew, Loveland, Sheldon, Schow, Williams, Erwin and Winsley

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6466 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Jennifer Joly (786-7305)

Hearing Dates: February 1, 1994

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

There is currently duplicative language regarding the requirements for the statewide multimodal transportation plan in RCW 47.01.290 and RCW 47.06.110.

SUMMARY:

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

Environmental regulatory authorities, including local governments, are involved early in the planning stages of transportation projects to avoid significant changes in substantially completed project design and engineering.

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 department, in cooperation with environmental regulatory authorities, shall identify potential environmental impacts, mitigation, and costs during the project identification and selection phase (scoping), 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 department 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 methodology for submitting plans and specifications to the environmental regulatory authorities which detail those project elements that impact environmental resources, and propose mitigation measures.

Prior to bid openings, 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.

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

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:

The department is required, in cooperation with the environmental regulatory authorities, to identify and document environmental resources, rather than potential environmental impacts, in the development of the state multimodal plan.

The methodology developed for submitting plans and specifications to the relevant environmental regulatory authorities shall be developed in consultation with those environmental regulatory authorities and shall be uniform.

The department 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.

Reference to the timing of the prebid meeting for environmentally complex projects is deleted.

The environmental regulatory authorities must provide their comments regarding the department's environmental plans in a timely manner.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

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 Environment and Siting. Early environmental planning and WSDOT interaction with environmental permitting authorities will promote quicker delivery of transportation projects.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: PRO: Senator Prentice, prime sponsor; Skip Burch, Assistant Secretary for Program Development, WSDOT; Carol Jolly, Department of Ecology