

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**SB 6491**

**AS PASSED SENATE, FEBRUARY 11, 1994**

**Brief Description:** Clarifying authority of regional transit authorities.

**SPONSORS:** Senators Vognild and Nelson

**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, Sheldon and Winsley.

**Staff:** Gene Baxstrom (786-7303)

**Hearing Dates:** January 31, 1994; February 1, 1994

**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:**

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.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** none requested

**TESTIMONY FOR:**

This bill allows the Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority to develop and place before the voters in the region an incremental approach to developing and funding a high capacity transit system. Nowhere else in the country is a local jurisdiction required to have voter approval for an entire 20 to 30 year system plan. Rather, the public should have specific identified projects to vote upon.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST:**

The regional transit plan costs too much and more attention needs to be paid to having riders pay for more of the cost of the system.

**TESTIFIED:** PRO: Aubrey Davis, Transportation Commission; Ken Madsen, Legislative Task Force For Regional Transportation Authority; CON: Paul Locke