

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5699

As of January 30, 1998

Title: An act relating to transportation planning.

Brief Description: Enhancing transportation planning.

Sponsors: Senators Wood, Haugen, Rasmussen, Horn, Sellar, Jacobsen, Prince and Oke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/25/97, 2/27/97 [DP, DNP]; 2/3/98.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Ashley Probart (786-7319)

Background: A number of unanswered questions exist regarding the treatment of state-owned transportation facilities in city and county comprehensive plans and development regulations, which are required by the state's Growth Management Act (GMA).

Linking transportation and land use decisions is cited as a goal of the GMA. For example, GMA provides that development should be encouraged ". . . in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner." However, how this linkage is to be achieved with regard to state-owned transportation facilities is unclear.

The measurement commonly used in transportation to determine adequacy is the level of service (LOS) standard. The LOS is an engineering formula that measures the flow of traffic on a particular facility. An LOS standard "A" means traffic is free flowing; an LOS standard "F" means traffic is at a standstill.

Cities and counties planning under the GMA are required to develop level of service standards for all "arterials and transit routes." Some local jurisdictions have interpreted "arterial" to include state-owned transportation facilities while others have not.

Determining the level of service standard establishes the benchmark for determining whether or not the transportation facilities are adequate to support development.

The "concurrency" provision of the GMA states in part: ". . . local jurisdictions must adopt and enforce ordinances which prohibit development approval if the development causes the level of service on a transportation facility to decline below the standards adopted in the transportation element of the comprehensive plan, unless transportation improvements or strategies to accommodate the impacts of development are made concurrent with the development."

The 1994 Legislature approved a study to address how state transportation facilities should be treated in local comprehensive plans. Representatives from cities; counties; ports; regional transportation planning organizations; the Department of Transportation; the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development; the private sector; and the Legislative Transportation Committee participated. The study, with recommendations, was completed in January 1995.

Summary of Bill: By December 31, 1999, cities and counties planning under the Growth Management Act (GMA) are required to include state-owned transportation facilities in the transportation element of their comprehensive plans.

The Department of Transportation (DOT), in consultation with local governments, is authorized to set level of service (LOS) standards for state highways and state ferry routes of statewide significance. Setting LOS standards for all other state-owned transportation facilities continues to be performed by regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs), jointly with DOT (current law).

RTPOs are required to work with cities, counties, transit agencies, DOT and others to develop LOS standards or alternative transportation performance measures.

Transportation facilities of statewide significance are set forth. These include the interstate; interregional state principal arterials, including ferry connections that serve statewide travel; intercity passenger rail services; intercity high-speed ground transportation; major passenger intermodal terminals, excluding all airport facilities and services; the freight railroad system; the Columbia/Snake navigable river system; marine port facilities and services that are related solely to marine activities affecting international and interstate trade; and high-capacity transportation systems.

The Transportation Commission must designate state highways of statewide significance and submit a list of such facilities for adoption by the 1998 Legislature.

Transportation facilities of statewide significance are deemed essential public facilities under the GMA.

The Transportation Commission must give higher priority to correcting identified deficiencies on transportation facilities of statewide significance.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: December 31, 1999.