

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1320

As Reported By House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to intercity passenger rail service.

Brief Description: Developing intercity passenger rail service.

Sponsors: Representatives Fisher, Ericksen, K. Schmidt, Cooper, Romero, O'Brien, Haigh, Ogden, Veloria, Wood, McIntire, Murray and Ruderman; by request of Department of Transportation.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/1/99, 2/22/99 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Subject to appropriation, the Department of Transportation (DOT) is granted power to acquire, develop, and own facilities related to providing rail passenger service.
- These powers granted to the department for rail are similar to those which DOT has for other programs including highways, ferry system, and aviation.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 21 members: Representatives Fisher, Democratic Co-Chair; K. Schmidt, Republican Co-Chair; Cooper, Democratic 1st Vice Chair; Edwards, Democratic 2nd Vice Chair; Ericksen, Republican Vice Chair; Hankins, Republican Vice Chair; G. Chandler; DeBolt; Hatfield; Hurst; Lovick; Mitchell; Morris; Pflug; Radcliff; Romero; Schindler; Schual-Berke; Scott; Skinner and Wood.

Staff: Gene Baxstrom (786-7303).

Background:

The Department of Transportation is granted a range of powers associated with developing and operating facilities for which it is responsible. These powers apply to highways, ferries and toll facilities, and airports and include the authority to acquire property, design and build facilities, and operate those facilities necessary to provide the modal service.

Statutory language which authorizes the intercity passenger rail program is more limited and provides broad directives for the department to implement a rail passenger program including station development, grade crossing improvements, track improvements, and contracting for services. It is not clear that existing statutes grant the department sufficient authority to engage in a partnership to improve the King Street Terminal in Seattle, or in other rail depot, parking, and maintenance facility projects.

Summary of Bill:

Subject to legislative appropriation, the Department of Transportation is granted certain powers relative to real property used in association with the state intercity rail passenger program including, but not limited to, depots, platforms, parking areas, and maintenance facilities.

These powers include: 1) acquiring such properties through purchase, lease, condemnation, or grant; and 2) constructing, improving, and operating such properties even if the real property is owned or controlled by another entity, provided that the expenditure of public funds must be directly related to public benefit of the rail program and the public investment must be secured with the owner's of real property through written contract. The department may also accept and utilize gifts, grants and donations for the public benefit.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: These powers are necessary to carry out the rail program including development of King Street station and the King Street maintenance yard.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Ken Uznanski, Washington State Department of Transportation.