

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESB 5371

As Reported By House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to intercity passenger rail service.

Brief Description: Developing intercity passenger rail service.

Sponsors: Senators Jacobsen, Horn, Haugen, Franklin, Costa and Kohl-Welles; by request of Department of Transportation.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 3/31/99, 4/1/99 [DP].

Brief Summary of Engrossed 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 22 members: Representatives Fisher, Democratic Co-Chair; K. Schmidt, Republican Co-Chair; Cooper, Democratic 1st Vice Chair; Ericksen, Republican Vice Chair; Hankins, Republican Vice Chair; Buck; G. Chandler; DeBolt; Fortunato; Hatfield; Hurst; Lovick; McDonald; Mitchell; Morris; Murray; Ogden; Pflug; Romero; Schindler; Schual-Berke and Skinner.

Staff: Gene Baxstrom (786-7303).

Background:

The Department of Transportation (DOT) 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 DOT 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 owners 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: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Alternative means of transportation, such as intercity rail, are important.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Joseph Johnston, Northwest Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America.