

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1943

As Reported by House Committee On:
Local Government & Housing

Title: An act relating to county rail districts.

Brief Description: Expanding purposes of county rail districts.

Sponsors: Representatives Mulliken, Grant, G. Chandler and Dunshee.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government & Housing: 2/22/01, 2/26/01 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands county authority to establish rail districts to include providing and funding of rail passenger services.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT & HOUSING

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Dunshee, Democratic Co-Chair; Mulliken, Republican Co-Chair; Edwards, Democratic Vice Chair; Berkey, Crouse, DeBolt, Dunn, Edmonds, Hatfield, Jarrett and Kirby.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Mielke, Republican Vice Chair.

Staff: Serena Dolly (786-7093).

Background:

Counties may establish one or more county rail districts to provide and fund improved rail freight service. The county legislative authority or property owners may initiate a county rail district. A district is governed by the county legislative authority and may levy excess taxes and issue bonds. A district boundary must include any area next to the rail service from which agricultural or other goods can be shipped by rail and may not include an area that does not or is not expected to produce goods shipped by the rail service.

Summary of Bill:

In addition to establishing a district for rail freight service, counties may establish county rail districts to provide and fund improved passenger rail service.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Expanding county rail district authority will allow counties to utilize existing laws to fund passenger rail service through revenue bonds and other mechanisms. The funding of passenger rail service is part of a larger public-private partnership in Kittitas County. Kittitas County, Cle Elum, and Ellensburg are working to restore east-west passenger rail service, which would connect to the north-south Puget Sound rail routes. Approximately 2,000 people commute from Kittitas County to Interstate 5, and passenger rail service will benefit commuters and reduce traffic on interstate 90. The bill will have no fiscal impact on the state.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Rep. Mulliken, prime sponsor; Steve Gano, Trend West Resorts; and Lois Musso, Coal Mines Trail Commission.