

Transportation Committee

HB 1667

Brief Description: *Establishing regional transportation governance.*

Sponsors: *Representatives Fisher, Mitchell and Poulsen; by request of The Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation.*

Brief Summary of Bill

- *Authorizes formation of transportation districts to assume duties of planning, prioritizing and funding regional transportation projects.*
- *Provides for directly elected or federated governance which may include more than one county.*

Hearing Date: *2/22/01*

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

Background:

The Governor and the Legislature created the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation in 1998 to: 1) assess the local, regional, and state transportation system; 2) ensure that current and future money is spent wisely; 3) make the system more accountable and predictable; and 4) prepare a 20-year plan for funding and investing in the transportation system. In December 2000 the Commission issued its findings and recommendations.

Recommendation 6 of the Blue Ribbon Commission states that regions be provided with the ability to plan, select, fund, and implement (or contract for implementation of) projects identified to meet the region's transportation and land use goals. The recommendation calls for a governing authority to reflect local and region-wide perspectives and may have a federated or directly elected membership.

Currently, counties and cities receive a portion of the state motor fuel tax for roads and highways. Transit districts also have the ability to increase the sales tax up to .09 percent

for transit. Some of the funds cities and counties spend on roads and streets come from their local general fund.

Currently 38 of the states 39 counties are members of 14 regional transportation policy organizations (RTPOs). These voluntary organizations of counties and cities within areas of the state jointly develop regional transportation policies and coordinate projects. Currently, the federal government requires the eight largest metropolitan areas of the states to have metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). These MPOs are part of the RTPOs.

Summary of Bill:

The legislative authority of any county may establish a transportation region. If the county proposes to establish a region, it must call for a conference. An elected official from each city within the county and a member of the county legislative authority must attend the conference. Also included must be representatives from any public transportation and high capacity transportation agencies providing service within the county, the local port, and the Washington State Department of Transportation.

The purpose of the conference is to evaluate the need for and desirability of creating a transportation region. A multi county transportation region conference may be held in those counties where the metropolitan region extends beyond the boundaries of one county. After the conference is held, the county legislative authority must conduct a public hearing. Notice of the hearing is required.

After the conference and the public hearing are held, the county legislative authority may establish a transportation region if the following are met: the authority finds the action to be in the public interest; it adopts an ordinance or resolution providing for the establishment of a region; 60 percent of the cities within the region representing a minimum of 75 percent of the cities' and towns' population approve the formation of the region; and the Governor approves the formation. The process to form a transportation region may be terminated at any time before the county establishes a transportation region.

The legislation forming the region must specify the form of governance for the region from two alternatives: a directly elected governing body, which may be the county legislative authority acting ex officio, or an appointed governing body consisting of elected officials from cities, members of governing bodies of public transportation and high capacity transportation systems, elected officials from each member county and a representative from the Department of Transportation.

If the governing board is the county legislative authority acting ex officio, a council must be created. The council must prioritize the use of designated funds for the region for expenditure on regionally significant transportation facilities and services. Regionally significant transportation facilities and services— means those that address mobility and congestion relief and travel demand between jurisdictions within a region of the state. The county legislative authority may only approve or disapprove, in its entirety, the funding for the list of projects and services recommended by the council.

The transportation region must: 1) prioritize the use of designated funds for expenditure on regionally significant transportation facilities and services; 2) develop criteria for project selection, which must be based upon transportation improvement benchmarks governing congestion relief, safety, mobility, and freight mobility; and 3) develop, or cause to be developed through contract, improvements to regionally significant transportation facilities and services.

The transportation region may assume the responsibilities of a metropolitan planning organization or regional transportation policy organization in its boundaries.

The region may contract indebtedness or borrow money for the region's purposes or issue general obligation bonds. The region may issue revenue bonds to provide funds to carry out its purposes without a referendum. The region must create a special fund, the purpose of which is to pay the principal and interest on the bonds.

If a transportation region is created, the office of the county treasurer acts as the ex officio treasurer of the region. All revenue received or generated by the region must be deposited into this account.

Appropriation: *None.*

Fiscal Note: *Preliminary Fiscal Note available.*

Effective Date: *The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2001.*