

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5107

As Passed Senate, February 14, 2002

Title: An act relating to rural county planning goals under the growth management act.

Brief Description: Authorizing rural counties to use alternative methods to achieve planning goals.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on State & Local Government (originally sponsored by Senators T. Sheldon, Honeyford, Hargrove and Rasmussen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State & Local Government: 2/12/01, 3/5/01 [DPS]; 2/6/02 [DP, DNP].

Passed Senate: 3/12/01, 41-5; 2/14/02, 42-5.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Gardner, Chair; Hale, Haugen, Horn, Keiser, Roach, T. Sheldon and Swecker.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Kline.

Staff: Eugene Green (786-7405)

Background: The comprehensive plan of a county or city that is required or chooses to plan under the Growth Management Act must consist of a map or maps, and descriptive text covering objectives, principles, and standards used to develop the comprehensive plan. The plan must be an internally consistent document and all elements must be consistent with the future land use map. Each comprehensive plan must be adopted and amended with public participation and each comprehensive plan must include a plan, scheme or design for each of the following: (1) a land use element; (2) a housing element; (3) a capital facilities plan element; (4) a utilities element; and (5) counties must adopt a rural element. Thirteen goals are specified to guide the development and adoption of the comprehensive plan and development regulations.

Summary of Bill: A rural county, defined as a county with a population density of less than 100 persons per square mile, after reaching an agreement with its cities, may develop a proposal for alternative methods of achieving the GMA planning goals. This authority may not be used to change the authority of GMA hearings boards regarding designation and protection of critical areas and natural resource lands, siting of essential public facilities, and adoption of a capital facilities plan element.

Before adoption of the alternative methods and accompanying development regulations, the county must provide an opportunity for public participation. The proposed and adopted alternative methods agreement (AMA) must be submitted to the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED) in the same manner as comprehensive plans are submitted. The AMA must be executed by the county and 60 percent of its cities consisting of at least 75 percent of the incorporated population. The AMA must be consistent with GMA goals and ensure adequate public facilities are provided concurrent with development. The AMA must provide among other things: a long-term vision for the countywide region, a strategy for addressing other appropriate issues, and performance-based monitoring with periodic reviews and adjustments.

The AMA may substitute for all or part of the GMA comprehensive plan. A report must be submitted to CTED on the results of the county's performance-based monitoring, at least every five years, beginning the date the agreement is executed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For (from 2/01): This alternative approach is only for rural counties. It gives them some needed flexibility for unique circumstances of rural counties and allows them to be creative without violating the goals and requirements of GMA.

Testimony Against (from 2/01): There is no need for this bill. There is plenty of flexibility already built into the act.

Testified (from 2/01): Janet Dawes, Mason County Comm. Dev. Council (con); Steve Stuart, 1000 Friends of WA (con); Mike McCormick, American Planning Assn. (con); Shane Hope, OCD (con); Richard Wysl, Jefferson County Comm. (pro).