

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5162

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, January 21, 2002

Title: An act relating to safety rest areas.

Brief Description: Allowing private entities to operate state-owned safety rest areas.

Sponsors: Senators Benton, Finkbeiner, Johnson, Oke, Hale, Parlette, West, Rossi and Long.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/26/01, 3/7/01 [DPS]; 1/21/02 [DP2S].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5162 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Benton, Eide, Finkbeiner, Horn, Kastama, McDonald, Oke, Prentice, T. Sheldon, Shin and Swecker.

Staff: Jennifer Ziegler (786-7316)

Background: The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) owns and operates 42 safety rest areas. Twenty-nine safety rest areas are located on the interstate system, ten on the national highway system, and the remaining three are on state routes. Federal funds were used to build or rehabilitate the majority of the safety rest areas. Approximately 77 million customers visit Washington's safety rest areas each biennium. The biennial cost of maintaining and operating safety rest areas is approximately \$8 million.

Summary of Second Substitute Bill: The Secretary of the WSDOT must solicit proposals from private and nonprofit entities for a joint safety rest area demonstration project. The WSDOT must negotiate and enter into agreements with private or nonprofit entities to provide safety rest area services at new safety rest area locations.

The negotiated agreements must include provisions requiring the safety rest area provider to give the WSDOT fair market value consideration for any access rights or use of WSDOT property. The safety rest area service provided must also meet department requirements. The term of the agreement may not exceed 20 years. The proponent must allow the WSDOT volunteer refreshment program to operate at the safety rest area. The WSDOT must seek permission from the Federal Highway Administration to privatize rest areas.

All revenues provided to the WSDOT from the demonstration project must be deposited in the motor vehicle fund. The WSDOT must provide an initial report to the Legislature by December 1, 2003, and annual reports after 2003.

The demonstration project is exempt from state contracting-out provisions and the statutory requirement for giving priority for vending machine operations to Services for the Blind.

Second Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The volunteer refreshment program is included in the pilot project. The WSDOT must seek permission from the Federal Highway Administration to privatize rest areas.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 24, 2001.

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

Testimony For: The state must look at new ways to introduce new revenue streams. This legislation saves taxpayer money while providing better service to the public. Federal highways are interested in a new opportunity.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Benton, prime sponsor; Paula Hammond, WSDOT; Kip Hawkins, Washington State Restaurant Assn.