

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5765

As Passed Senate, April 30, 2001

Title: An act relating to improving the efficiency and accountability of the environmental permitting and compliance process for transportation projects.

Brief Description: Streamlining the environmental permit process for transportation projects.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Prentice, Swecker, Shin, Oke, Parlette, Horn, Haugen and McDonald; by request of The Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/14/01, 3/8/01 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 4/4/01, 44-1.

First Special Session: Passed Senate: 4/30/01, 44-4.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5765 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Gardner, Vice Chair; Benton, Eide, Finkbeiner, Horn, Jacobsen, Johnson, Kastama, McAuliffe, McDonald, Oke, Patterson, Prentice, T. Sheldon, Shin and Swecker.

Staff: Jennifer Ziegler (786-7316)

Background: The Legislature and the Governor formed the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation in 1998 to assess the local, regional, and state transportation system; ensure that current and future money is spent wisely; make the system more accountable and predictable; and prepare a 20-year plan for funding and investing in the transportation system. The commission consisted of 46 members representing business, labor, agriculture, tribes, government, ports, shipping, trucking, transit, rail, environmental interests, and the general public.

The commission made 18 recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature. Recommendation 11 directs the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to work toward a goal of one-stop environmental permitting for transportation projects.

Summary of Bill: The following projects are eligible for a streamlined environmental permitting process: pilot projects designated in this act, transportation projects of statewide significance, and projects selected for programmatic review by the transportation permitting committee created in this act.

Transportation projects of statewide significance means a surface transportation project or combination of projects, that cross multiple city or county jurisdictional boundaries or

connects major destinations in support of the economy. These projects are designated by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and must be approved by the Senate and House Transportation committees. The projects also may be designated by the Senate and House Transportation committees.

The Transportation Permit Efficiency and Accountability Committee (TPEAC) is created. The TPEAC must consist of the following voting members: four legislators, Secretary of WSDOT designee, Director of Department of Fish and Wildlife designee, Director of Department of Ecology designee, state Commissioner of Public Lands designee, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission designee, Columbia River Intertribal Fisheries Commission designee, representatives of local government interests, a representative from the construction industry, a representative of environmental interests, and a representative of citizens engaged in fish and wildlife recovery. The TPEAC is authorized to create technical subcommittees for individual projects. Local government representatives must be part of the technical subcommittees. WSDOT must provide administrative assistance to the TPEAC.

The TPEAC must develop a one-stop permitting process that uses an interdisciplinary review of transportation projects to streamline and expedite approval of permits. The one-stop process must include early review and coordination between state regulatory agencies and WSDOT to develop common goals.

The TPEAC must conduct three pilot projects. The pilot projects must include a mix of projects and areas encompassing the Translake and I-405 Congestion Relief Study areas, projects that can be grouped for geographic permitting related to Western Washington watersheds, and projects that can be grouped for geographic permitting related to Eastern Washington watersheds. The TPEAC must provide a summary report to the Legislature every six months beginning September 15, 2001.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: There are concerns regarding unnecessary layers of government and this legislation is a way to eliminate some of those unnecessary layers. It is important for state agencies to jump start the permit streamlining process.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Prentice, prime sponsor; Andrew Johnsen, Governor's Executive Policy Office; Gordon White, DOE, Greg Hueckel, DFW; Jerry Alb, WSDOT; Ron Schultz, Audubon Society.