

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6032

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As of February 28, 2001

**Title:** An act relating to an evaluation of the need for a separate department of aviation.

**Brief Description:** Evaluating a separate department of aviation.

**Sponsors:** Senators Haugen and Morton.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Transportation: 2/28/01.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Staff:** Jennifer Ziegler (786-7316)

**Background:** The Washington Aeronautics Commission was independent from the Department of Transportation until 1977. In 1977, the Legislature consolidated the Aeronautics Commission, the Toll Bridge Authority, and the Department of Highways into the Washington State Department of Transportation.

Port districts, cities, or counties generally operate airports. The Aviation Division is responsible for general aviation airport aid, coordinating search and rescue and air disaster relief programs, administering pilot and aircraft registration, coordinating the airport planning process, conducting aviation safety seminars, and maintaining 16 airports throughout the state.

Funding for the Aviation Division comes from the state aviation fuel tax, the air registration fee, the aircraft excise tax, pilot registration fees and grants. The total appropriation for the Aviation Division in the 1999-01 biennium is \$5.2 million.

Most state aviation agencies are housed in a state transportation department and primarily carry out federal policies related to aviation safety and airport planning. Seven states have independent aviation divisions. Oregon most recently created a separate Department of Aviation, which has been operating for approximately six months.

**Summary of Bill:** The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) must convene a panel of stakeholders to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of removing the aviation division from WSDOT and creating a separate Washington State Department of Aviation.

The evaluation must include a survey of aviation customers to determine if the current division meets customer needs, an analysis of WSDOT's processes to determine whether a separate aviation division would result in cost savings, and a financial analysis to determine if the aviation division could operate without additional state resources.

The stakeholder panel must make recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor by December 1, 2001.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 22, 2001.

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