

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6140

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, April 9, 2001

Title: An act relating to the creation of congestion relief boards.

Brief Description: Creating congestion relief boards.

Sponsors: Senators McDonald, Prentice, Horn, Eide, Johnson, Finkbeiner, Patterson, Shin, Benton, Kastama, Costa, McAuliffe, Rossi, Long, Roach, Zarelli and Oke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 3/15/01, 4/9/01 [DPS, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6140 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Eide, Finkbeiner, Horn, Johnson, McAuliffe, McDonald, Oke, Patterson, Prentice, T. Sheldon, Shin and Swecker.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Benton.

Staff: Jennifer Strus (786-7484)

Background: The Governor and the Legislature created the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation (BRCT) in 1998 to do the following: assess the local, regional and state transportation systems; 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. In its final report, the BRCT issued 18 recommendations. Recommendation 6 states that regions be provided with the ability to plan, select, fund, and implement (or contract for the implementation of) projects identified to meet the region's transportation and land use goals.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Congestion relief districts (CRD) are created and consist of legislative districts adjacent to or impacted by a transportation corridor. The Central Puget Sound Congestion Relief District is also created and includes specific legislative districts in the central Puget Sound area.

The membership of the Congestion Relief Planning Committee (Committee) consists of one representative from each legislative district within the district's boundaries. The three legislators from the district choose a fourth person, not a legislator, to sit on the Committee.

The Committee must select highway improvement projects that focus on highway traffic congestion relief. A highway improvement project is one that adds a lane or lanes to a state

route or federal interstate including HOV lanes, fly-over ramps, park and ride lots, and bus pullouts which will serve new lanes added to a state route or federal interstate. Once the planning committee has chosen the project(s), it must develop a funding package. The funding package is dedicated to the specific projects chosen by the committee. The CRD, by majority vote of the residents of the board's boundaries, can impose the following revenue options: a local option regional sales and use tax of up to 0.5 percent; a local option vehicle license fee of up to \$75 per vehicle; a local option fuel tax of up to 6 cents per gallon; or a local option commercial vehicle charge up to \$150 per vehicle.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) must create a division of dedicated staff and services whose sole responsibility is to coordinate the design, preliminary engineering, permit, financing, and construction of projects selected. A CRD may or may not choose to seek or accept assistance from this division.

The CRD matching account is created in the MVF. Funds raised by the CRD are deposited into the account.

The regionally raised revenues must be placed in this account. State funds appropriated by the Legislature for CRD projects must also be placed in this account. The CRD may receive a 60 percent state match for the total cost of the project(s) approved by the voters.

WSDOT and the CRD may use the design-build procedure for projects selected by the Committee.

Within 30 days of completing construction on a project(s), the CRD must terminate day to day operations. If no debt service payments or collection of revenue is needed, the CRD must dissolve. Any taxes imposed to fund the project terminate when the financing or debt service on the project is complete.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The highway improvement projects on which revenue raised under this act can be spent are expanded to include HOV lanes, fly-over ramps, bus pullouts and park and ride lots. The benchmarks are removed. The Central Puget Sound CRD is created; any additional CRD boundaries must be designated by the Legislature.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The selection of the district members with input of the Legislature would ensure fairer representation. This bill is a good example of state and local partnership without creating a new level of government.

Testimony Against: Greater flexibility in defining governance and benchmarks, boundaries and project selection is needed. The bill must be consistent with the Growth Management Act and it is not. The committee and the district should be represented by an elected official. As the bill is currently configured, it's too easy to remove a member. Cities should be better

represented on the committee and the district. There are concerns with the narrow definition of transportation projects; the definition should be broadened to include a more multi-modal approach. Lack of coordination with WSDOT is problematic.

Testified: Thayer Ravabough, City of Vancouver (concerns); Dan Clauson, Renton City Council (pro); King Parker, Renton City Council (pro); Sherry Appleton, League of Women Voters (con); Jackie White, Washington State Association of Counties (concerns); Dan Snow, Washington State Transit (concerns); Greg Hannan, Western States Petroleum Association (concerns); Jim Thomas, Dept. of Revenue (concerns); Ashley Probart, Association of Washington Cities (concerns); Larry Montgomery, ATU Legislative Council (con); Margaret Kitchell, Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility (con); Bill LaBorde, Transportation Choices Coalition (con).