

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6172

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

Title: An act relating to regional transportation governance.

Brief Description: Authorizing creation of regional congestion relief districts.

Sponsors: Senators Patterson, Horn, Haugen, Finkbeiner, Costa, McDonald, Prentice, Constantine, Kohl-Welles, Eide, McAuliffe, Fairley and Jacobsen.

Brief History:

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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6172 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Gardner, Vice Chair; Eide, Jacobsen, Kastama, McAuliffe, Patterson, Prentice, Shin and Swecker.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Benton and Johnson.

Staff: Jennifer Strus (786-7484)

Background: The Governor and 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 implementation of) projects identified to meet the region's transportation and land use goals.

Summary of Substitute Bill: A county executive or chair of a county commission may convene a committee to form a regional congestion relief district. The committee convened must consist of the county executives or chair of the board of county commissioners in the affected counties and a person appointed by the Governor.

The committee's responsibilities include: setting the district boundaries; appointing advisors and conducting public meetings as needed; adopting a plan to include projects that meet funding qualifications and provide financing for those projects; forward the plan to the cities within the district, 60 percent of the cities representing a minimum of 75 percent of the population must respond within 60 days of receiving the plan; and submitting to the

Governor, at the time the plan is certified to the ballot, the names of three nominees for each director position.

The county legislative authority (CLA) that receives the plan must certify the plan to the ballot. The plan to be submitted to the ballot must include the specific transportation projects which are defined as major capital facility improvements of such significant impact to the CRD that without regionally raised revenues, coupled with state funds, the improvements could not be accomplished.

Each district must have three directors to manage its affairs. Directors are appointed by the Governor from a list of appointees provided by the formation committee. The directors constitute the governing board of the district and are responsible for the execution of the voter-approved plan.

The district shall accomplish the projects by entering into agreements with the project sponsor as to who will acquire, construct or develop the projects. The project sponsor is WSDOT.

The district's overall plan must leverage the district's financial contributions so that project sponsors and other revenue sources continue to fund major congestion relief and transportation capital facility improvement projects. The plan, when it is submitted to the voters, must provide funding estimates for each priority project. The plan may list additional projects that may be funded if there are surplus funds. 95 percent of all funds must be spent on the project and up to 5 percent may be spent on administrative expenses of the district.

The district's plan submitted to the voters may recommend the imposition of some or all of the following revenue sources: a vehicle license fee of up to \$75; a commercial vehicle fee of up to \$150; regional sales and use tax as a percentage of selling price; user fees on projects improved under this bill; a vehicle miles traveled charge; and excess county property levy.

The district has no ability to bond but may enter into agreements with the project sponsors to pledge revenue raised in the district to pay in whole or in part the bond debt for the district's project(s).

The district continues in existence as long as projects are being actively developed or taxes levied to meet continuing obligations. Once the projects are complete or the taxes no longer needed, the directors of the district submit to the CLA a resolution of dissolution. Any unspent district funds are transferred to the motor vehicle fund to be spent on transportation projects within the former district.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The number of directors is lowered to three. The types of projects that can be funded under this act are narrowed. The number of revenue options is increased. The number of project sponsors is lowered from five to one: WSDOT.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on April 3, 2001.

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

Testimony For: The multi-modal approach to regional transportation is better than a roads-only focus. The portion of the bill that adopts the Growth Management Act approach is appreciated. The flexibility in the bill to support transit systems is needed.

Testimony Against: The committee and district representation should be by elected officials to ensure fair representation. It's too easy to replace people with whom the county legislative authority might be displeased. Concerns were raised with the narrow definition of transportation projects.

Testified: Sherry Appleton, League of Women Voters (con); Ashley Probart, Assn. of WA Cities (concerns); Jackie White, WA State Assn. of Counties (concerns).