

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## ESB 6188

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Synopsis as Enacted

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

**Sponsors:** Senators Prentice, Swecker, Haugen, McDonald, Gardner, Horn, Rasmussen and Deccio.

**Senate Committee on Transportation**  
**House Committee on Transportation**

**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:** 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 a programmatic approach by the transportation permit efficiency and accountability 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 WSDOT and must be approved by the Senate and House Transportation Committees.

The Transportation Permit Efficiency and Accountability Committee (TPEAC) is created. The TPEAC must consist of the following nine voting members: four legislators, a Secretary of WSDOT designee, a Director of Department of Fish and Wildlife designee, a Director of Department of Ecology designee, an Association of Washington Cities designee, and a Washington State Association of Counties designee. The eight nonvoting members of the committee include representatives from the construction industry, environmental interests, labor, and tribes. The WSDOT must provide administrative assistance to the TPEAC.

The TPEAC must assess the application of current environmental standards and integrate those standards where appropriate. The TPEAC must designate three pilot projects and use a streamlined process for permitting those projects. The TPEAC must also develop a list of streamlining opportunities and make recommendations to the Legislature on necessary

statutory or administrative changes. Finally, the TPEAC must implement a streamlined permitting process for transportation projects of statewide significance based on the integrated standards developed by the committee. Committee action may not override existing statutes, regulations or local ordinances. The committee must make twice yearly reports to the Legislature.

Local governments have three options for participating in the streamlined process. If a local government elects to be a participating entity, a representative from the local government will be part of the coordinated review of the project. If a local government elects to be an assigning entity, the local government will enter into an agreement with the department to define the local permit requirements that must be met. If a local government elects not to participate in the coordinated process, the department will conduct the local permitting process and must comply with the provisions of the city and county ordinances.

An interim process for permitting transportation projects of statewide significance applies until the TPEAC adopts integrated standards and best management practices. This process is optional for the department and specifies a six-step process including early involvement of affected agencies, identification of permit requirements, selection of preferred alternatives, coordinated reviews and hearings, and timelines for completing reviews and decisions.

This legislation expires March 31, 2003.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

First Special Session

Senate	39	3
House	96	0

**Effective:** May 29, 2001