
SENATE BILL 6795

State of Washington 57th Legislature

2002 Regular Session

By Senators Parlette, Hochstatter, Deccio, Rasmussen, Brown, Honeyford and Kline

Read first time 02/05/2002. Referred to Committee on Transportation.

1 AN ACT Relating to studying and reporting on the feasibility of
2 state-supported east-west rail passenger service; and creating new
3 sections.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The BNSF RR now operates freight rail
6 service over its mainlines between Seattle and Spokane via Wenatchee,
7 Seattle, and Pasco via Yakima, and Portland and Spokane via Pasco. The
8 passenger trains that serve Spokane, eastbound and westbound, arrive
9 and depart between 12:15 a.m. and 2:45 a.m. The westbound passenger
10 trains that serve Pasco, Ephrata, and Wenatchee arrive and depart
11 before 6:00 a.m. There is no rail passenger service for Kennewick,
12 Yakima, Ellensburg, Leavenworth, and the many other communities located
13 on mainline track in eastern Washington. There are more than twenty
14 thousand cars, with many occupied only by the driver, and eight
15 thousand trucks, on average each day, traveling over the interstate 90
16 and state route 2 highways between eastern and western Washington. The
17 population of eastern Washington exceeds one million three hundred
18 thousand people. There is significant interest in eastern Washington

1 in fast and convenient intercity rail passenger service and commuter
2 rail passenger service.

3 (2) In eastern Washington, sixteen city councils, four county
4 commissions, and the Spokane regional transportation council have
5 declared their support for a feasibility study of state-sponsored rail
6 passenger service in eastern Washington. The 2000 legislature
7 authorized a study of eastern Washington rail passenger service with
8 limited funding. The study was completed and a report filed in 2001
9 with the recommendation by the department of transportation as follows,
10 in part:

11 "...in light of the finding of this preliminary assessment, the
12 study team recommends that Washington state undertake a
13 detailed study of the east-west passenger rail service on all
14 three cross state corridors."

15 (3) A comprehensive study of railroad passenger service over the
16 lines running from Portland to Spokane via Pasco, Seattle to Spokane
17 via Pasco, and Seattle to Spokane via Wenatchee would be helpful and in
18 the public interest.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) The department of transportation shall
20 conduct a comprehensive study concerning the feasibility of the
21 operation of rail passenger service from:

22 (a) King Street station in Seattle via Wenatchee to the rail
23 station in Spokane;

24 (b) King Street station in Seattle via Yakima to the rail station
25 in Pasco;

26 (c) The rail station in Pasco via Ritzville to the rail station in
27 Spokane; and

28 (d) The rail station in Portland via Vancouver and Pasco to the
29 rail station in Spokane.

30 (2) The department of transportation shall assess, analyze, and
31 report about the possibility of intercity rail service or commuter rail
32 service over any segment of any of the rail lines under subsection (1)
33 of this section.

34 (3) The department of transportation shall consider whether
35 passenger trains can be safely operated at sufficient speeds between
36 Auburn and Pasco via Yakima under the present track, tunnel, and signal
37 conditions.

1 (4) The department of transportation may exercise discretion when
2 assessing, analyzing, and reporting on issues, including ridership and
3 any necessary funding and potential sources of funding.

4 (5) The department of transportation shall report to the
5 transportation committees of the legislature by December 15, 2002.

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