HOUSE BILL REPORT
SHB 2172

As Passed House:
March 14, 2003

Title: An act relating to promoting the purchase of fuel cells for the use of distributive generation at state-owned facilities.

Brief Description: Promoting the purchase of fuel cells for the use of distributive generation at state-owned facilities.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Technology, Telecommunications & Energy (originally sponsored by Representatives Sullivan, Morris, Benson, Rockefeller, Wood and Hudgins).

Brief History:
Committee Activity:
Technology, Telecommunications & Energy: 3/3/03, 3/4/03 [DPS].
Floor Activity:
Passed House: 3/14/03, 94-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs state agencies to consider the use of fuel cells as the primary source of power in construction of state facilities where an uninterruptible source of power is required.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, TELECOMMUNICATIONS & ENERGY

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Morris, Chair; Ruderman, Vice Chair; Sullivan, Vice Chair; Crouse, Ranking Minority Member; Nixon, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Blake, Bush, DeBolt, Delvin, Hudgins, Kirby, McMahan, Romero, Tom, Wallace and Wood.

Staff: Pam Madson (786-7166).

Background:

A fuel cell operates like a battery with an external fuel source. It produces electricity

through an electrochemical process. Activated by a catalyst, hydrogen and oxygen produce electricity and by-products of water, heat, and small amounts of carbon dioxide (CO2). It does not run down or need recharging as long as fuel is supplied.

A number of fuel cell technologies are under development. The most commercially developed is a phosphoric acid fuel cell (PAFC) and it is being used in hotels, hospitals, and office buildings. The proton-exchange membrane (PEM) fuel cell is currently being tested for commercial application under an energy efficiency program through the Bonneville Power Administration. This fuel cell operates at low temperatures and can vary its output to meet demand. These cells are best candidates for light-duty vehicles, buildings, and smaller applications. Another fuel cell under development is the solid oxide fuel cell (SOFC). This is an option for high-powered applications such as industrial uses or central electricity generating stations.

There a number of other fuel cell technologies under development for a variety of applications. Fuel cell research is being conducted in Washington State at Pacific Northwest National Laboratories in Richland and Avista Labs in Spokane.

Fuel cells are not yet readily available to consumers but an increasing number of products are being tested for commercial application. Cost is also a factor in availability of fuel cells.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

When planning for the construction of state facilities that require and uninterruptible source of power, state agencies must consider using fuel cell technology as a primary source of energy for a facility.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill asks state agencies to consider using fuel cells as a primary source of energy. It is interesting to note that Long Island Power and Light is placing 45 fuel cells in single and multiple family housing as well as businesses. King County is currently operating a one megawatt test fuel cell in the Renton sewer treatment plant. The proposed Brightwater plant will have a much larger fuel cell facility.

The intent is to look at this issue and work on additional fuel cell technology bills that

would promote research and development and work toward establishing a solid industry in the state of Washington and provide leadership to do that.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Sullivan, prime sponsor.