

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2923

As Passed House:

February 16, 2004

Title: An act relating to authorizing magnetic levitation transportation systems.

Brief Description: Authorizing magnetic levitation transportation systems.

Sponsors: By Representatives Ericksen, Dickerson, Sullivan, Nixon and G. Simpson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/5/04, 2/9/04 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/16/04, 98-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizing magnetic levitation transportation and personal rapid transit system pilots.
- Designates eight legislative members to work with counties to approve and implement pilot projects.
- Authorizes magnetic levitation technology transportation systems to use existing high capacity transportation local option funding sources and public private partnerships.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 27 members: Representatives Murray, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; G. Simpson, Vice Chair; Ericksen, Ranking Minority Member; Jarrett, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Bailey, Campbell, Clibborn, Cooper, Dickerson, Flannigan, Hankins, Hatfield, Hudgins, Kristiansen, Lovick, Mielke, Morris, Nixon, Rodne, Romero, Shabro, Sullivan, Wallace, Wood and Woods.

Staff: Jerry Long (786-7306).

Background:

In the early 1990s, high-capacity transportation (HTC) systems were authorized to offer public transportation services within an urbanized region operating on authorized exclusive right of ways along with the supporting services and facilities necessary to implement the system. The services are to provide a higher level of passenger capacity, speed and service frequency. Transit agencies which include city owned transit systems, county transportation authorities, metropolitan municipal corporations and public transportation benefit areas are responsible for planning, construction and operations. A planning process is outlined in statute.

Only those transit agencies in counties with a population of 175,000 or more and has an interstate highway within its borders, except for any county having a population of more than one million or a county that has a population of more than 400,000 and is adjacent to a county with a population of one million or more may operate a HTC system.

The HTC agencies may use the following dedicated voter approved funding sources: employer tax and sales and use tax. These taxes are in addition to any federal, state, local and private sector assistance available.

The HTC systems are defined in statute as rapid rail system, monorail, trolley or other fixed rail guideway. Magnetic levitation and personal rapid transit, relatively new technology, is not in that definition.

Magnetic levitation (maglev) is an advanced technology in which magnetic force lifts, propels and guides a vehicle over a guideway speeds of 250 to 300 miles per hour. The guideway is the physical structure along which maglev vehicles are levitated. The concept of magnetically levitated trains was first identified at around 1900. The maglev technology was largely advanced in Germany and Japan particularly in the 1980s. Little research in the United States was performed until the 1990s when the National Maglev Initiative was established.

To evaluate the potential for maglev to improve intercity transportation and to determine an appropriate role for the federal government, the "Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century" (TEA 21) was passed in 1998, which created a National Magnetic Levitation Technology Deployment Program.

Summary of Bill:

Magnetic levitation and personal rapid transit systems are included in the definition of a high capacity transportation system. The magnetic levitation technology and personal rapid transit systems to use voter approved local option funding which includes the existing employer tax and sales and use tax in addition to any federal, state, local and private sector funding available. The counties are also authorized to use public-private partnerships.

The Legislature authorizes the implementation of pilot projects for magnetic levitation technology and personal rapid transportation systems within the existing planning requirements for other types of high capacity transportation systems. Eight legislative members, two from each legislative caucus to approve and work with counties in the implementation of pilot projects.

All counties are eligible to implement pilot projects.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2004.

Testimony For: Magnetic levitation in Japan and Germany since the early 1980s has been a proven technology to move passengers between cities safely at higher speeds. Since the trains are elevated they are not affected by weather and have a lower operating cost. The new magnetic levitation system in Shanghai, China started commercial operation in December 2003 and travels at 270 miles per hour. The system moves passengers and could move freight at high rates of speed between cities. This bill adds magnetic levitation into the Washington statutes as a high capacity transportation system.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Ericksen, prime sponsor; and George Anagnostopoulos, Volpe Center.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.