
Transportation Committee

HB 1387

Brief Description: Enhancing accountability in transportation governance.

Sponsors: Representatives Ericksen, Jarrett, Woods, Schindler, Anderson, Bush, McDonald, Shabro, Ahern, Bailey, Talcott, Clements, Chandler, Sehlin, Buck, Mielke, Boldt, Benson, Alexander, Newhouse, Nixon, Pflug, Holmquist and McMahan.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Abolishes the Transportation Commission.
- Moves most Commission functions to the Legislative Transportation Committee.
- The Secretary of Washington State's Department of Transportation will be appointed by the Governor.

Hearing Date: 1/27/03

Staff: Jeff Doyle (786-7322).

Background:

The Legislature created the Transportation Commission in 1977 to govern the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). The seven-member commission appoints the Secretary of Transportation, proposes transportation legislation and budgets, approves the issuance of bonds for highways, and establishes the policies of the WSDOT in coordinating transportation planning and administering grants to cities and counties. The Commission has authority to determine ferry fares, tolls, and other charges for use of the transportation system.

The Commission is also responsible for development of a state transportation policy plan (20-year plan) that addresses all modes of transportation. Finally, the Commission is tasked with developing transportation system benchmarks under SHB 2304, enacted during the 2002 session.

In 1998, the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation (BRCT) was formed to analyze the state's transportation system and to make recommendations for reform and improvement. The BRCT found that in Washington, more than 468 governmental entities have authority for transportation planning, funding, management and construction of the system. They recommended that a single point of accountability for the state system be designated. To accomplish this, the BRCT recommended that the Secretary of the Washington State Department of Transportation be appointed directly by the Governor, thus making the Governor accountable for the performance of the state transportation system. The BRCT also recommended that the mission of the state Transportation Commission (who previously appointed the Secretary of WDOT) be modified to make the Commission responsible for benchmarking and performance measures for the state transportation system.

Summary of Bill:

The Transportation Commission is abolished. The Legislative Transportation Committee assumes the powers of the Transportation Commission, except for imposing ferry fares and tolls; submitting the capital and operating budget and bond sale request to support the programs and operations of the Department of Transportation; and managing cash flow. These powers are transferred to the Department of Transportation.

The Secretary of the Department of Transportation is appointed by the Governor.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: January 4, 2004.