
Transportation Committee

HB 1389

Brief Description: Directing performance audits of the department of transportation.

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

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires performance audits of the Department of Transportation
- The Legislative Transportation Committee will oversee the audits, with professional and technical expertise contracted out
- Department of Transportation is required to submit performance data related to capacity improvement projects and safety projects

Hearing Date: 1/27/03

Staff: Jeff Doyle (786-7322).

Background:

The State Auditor's office regularly audits state and local government agencies. These fiscal audits focus on accounting controls and statutory compliance. Performance audits, on the other hand, focus on the operational effectiveness and efficiency of an organization or program. These audits are most typically conducted through the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) at the direction of the legislature. Neither the State Auditor nor JLARC conduct regular scheduled performance audits of agencies.

Since 1991 there have been eight performance audits performed (seven since 1998) on the three major transportation-related agencies: Department of Licensing (DOL), Washington State Patrol (WSP) and the Department of Transportation (DOT). All of the performance audits had recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the agency and/or programs. Many (but not all) of the recommendations were implemented.

Most recently, there have been initiatives or referenda that required some form of performance auditing of transportation agencies. Referendum 51 contained provisions requiring a new citizen board to analyze and report on the expenditures and progress of new transportation projects that were to be funded with the new taxes proposed in that measure. Initiative 745 would have required (among other things) the State Auditor to conduct transportation performance audits. Proposed Initiative 257 would have required the State Auditor to conduct performance audits of all state agencies.

There is no current legal mandate for regular performance auditing of transportation-related agencies.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislative Transportation Committee (LTC) is directed to conduct regular performance audits of the Department of Transportation (DOT). LTC must contract with private sector professional and technical experts to conduct the audits.

The scope of the performance audits must include nine elements: identification of cost savings; identification of services that can be reduced or eliminated; identification of programs or services that can be transferred to the private sector; analysis of gaps or overlaps in programs or services and recommendations to correct gaps or overlaps; feasibility of pooling information technology systems within the Department; analysis of the roles and functions of the Department, and recommendations to change or eliminate departmental roles or functions; recommendations for statutory or regulatory changes that may be necessary for the Department to properly carry out its functions; analysis of departmental performance data, performance measures, and self-assessment systems; and identification of best practices.

The DOT is also required to submit performance data related to the proposed transportation project list submitted each year to the legislature. For capacity improvement projects, DOT must submit data demonstrating the estimated congestion relief savings. For safety projects, DOT must submit estimates of the number of lives saved and the reduction in negative economic impacts for high-accident areas.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.