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**Transportation Committee**

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**HB 1702**

**Brief Description:** Recovering costs for motorist information signs.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Hatfield, Mielke, Romero, Armstrong, Cooper, Blake, Boldt, Orcutt, Santos, McCoy, Alexander, Schoesler, Chandler, Grant, Schindler and Condotta.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires the Department of Transportation to charge reasonable fees to recover their costs for the erection and maintenance of motorist information sign panels.
- Repeals current law requiring the Department of Transportation to contract out the motorist information sign program.

**Hearing Date:** 2/27/03

**Staff:** Reema Griffith (786-7301).

**Background:**

Under current law the Department of Transportation (DOT) is authorized to erect and maintain motorist information sign panels within the right of way of the highway system to provide the traveling public with information regarding gas, food, lodging, and tourist-oriented businesses available at or near an interchange. The DOT is required to charge reasonable fees to defray the cost of installation and maintenance of the individual business signs on the motorist information panels. However, current language falls short of requiring, but rather authorizes the DOT to also charge reasonable fees to recover their costs for the erection and maintenance of the information sign panels.

A law change was made during the 2002 legislative session which required the DOT to contract with a private contractor to administer the motorist information sign panel program. Under this law, the contractor would be solely responsible for the marketing, administration, financial management, sign fabrication, installation and maintenance of the information sign panels.

During the 2002 interim a debate was sparked surrounding a provision in the new law that authorized the contractor to set the market rate to be charged to the businesses advertising on

the information sign panels. Currently, the DOT charges \$100 per year for a business to advertise on a panel located on the interstate but at this fee level, the DOT is not recovering their costs. Conversely, in states where a private contractor runs the motorist information sign panel program, fees to participating businesses range from \$650 to \$4,600 per year.

**Summary of Bill:**

The DOT is required to charge reasonable fees to recover their costs for the erection and maintenance of the motorist information sign panels.

The current law requiring the DOT to contract out the motorist information sign program is repealed.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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