

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1960

As Reported by House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to regional transportation governance.

Brief Description: Studying regional transportation governance.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Murray, Jarrett, Cooper, Dickerson and Hudgins).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/19/04, 1/26/04 [DP2S].

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Creates a nine-member elected council in 2006 to be responsible for transportation planning and coordination within King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap counties.
- Transfers governance of the Regional Transportation Investment District and the Regional Transit Authority to the Puget Sound Regional District Council.
- Refers this act to voters in the region.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass. Signed by 24 members: Representatives Murray, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Simpson, G., Vice Chair; Ericksen, Ranking Minority Member; Jarrett, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Campbell, Clibborn, Cooper, Dickerson, Edwards, Flannigan, Hatfield, Hudgins, Lovick, Morris, Nixon, Rodne, Romero, Shabro, Sullivan, Wallace, Wood and Woods.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Armstrong, Hankins, Kristiansen, Mielke and Schindler.

Staff: Gene Baxstrom (786-7303).

Background:

Federal law requires that metropolitan areas greater than 50,000 persons must have a metropolitan planning organization (MPO). This designation is made by the Governor and must have the concurrence of local government officials representing 75 percent of the population within the area, including the central city or as otherwise provided for by state or local law. The formation of these agencies is a precondition for receiving federal highway and transit funds. There are currently nine MPOs in Washington with two more being formed following the 2000 census.

Federal law requires MPOs to develop a metropolitan transportation plan with a 20-year horizon, and a three-year financially constrained transportation improvement program. Federal law also requires MPOs to have a transportation policy board which includes local elected officials, officials of agencies that administer or operate major modes or transportation systems and appropriate state officials.

State law authorizes the voluntary association of governments for transportation planning purposes in the form of regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs). The federally-mandated MPOs are designated as the RTPOs under the state's 1990 Growth Management Act (GMA). State requirements for regional transportation planning largely mirrored federal requirements and also include a requirement to certify that the transportation elements of local comprehensive plans conform with the GMA and are consistent with the regional transportation plan.

The MPO for the Puget Sound region is the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) which encompasses King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap Counties. It is a voluntary association of county and city governments established through interlocal agreements. Pursuant to federal and state requirements, the PSRC has a Transportation Policy Board of locally elected government officials plus other providers of transportation programs within the region. The PSRC has also formed the Transit Operators Committee to provide a forum for discussing regional transit issues.

Within the PSRC planning area, transportation planning and/or service provision is provided by numerous public agencies. These include: the Department of Transportation, responsible for state highways within the region; four county governments; over 65 cities; six public transportation agencies including the Seattle monorail authority located in different counties; the three-county regional transit authority (Sound Transit); Washington State Ferries, a division of the Department of Transportation, operating both auto and passenger-only ferry service; and several port districts. The newly authorized Regional Transportation Investment District has also formed a planning committee and is developing a regional plan to fund improvements in major highway corridors in King, Pierce and Snohomish counties.

Summary of Second Substitute Bill:

Effective January 1, 2006, the Puget Sound Regional Transportation District Council (Council) is created to govern the Puget Sound Regional Transportation District. The Council

is comprised of nine elected members and assumes the functions of the metropolitan planning organization and regional transportation planning organization functions.

By May 1, 2005, the county legislative authority members of King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap counties are required to define eight councilor districts within the region, based on equal populations. One councilor from each district is to be elected in November 2005, and the council president is to be elected at large. The president and the four councilors receiving the most votes are elected to four-year terms, with the remaining four councilors elected to two-year terms. The council president is the presiding officer of the Council and sets the Council agenda.

Effective January 1, 2006, the Council duties are to:

- Assume responsibility for the metropolitan and regional transportation planning function of the region;
- Identify transportation facilities and services of the Department of Transportation, cities, counties, public transportation providers and other publicly financed transportation providers that serve regionally significant corridors or are regionally significant and adopt a plan for allocation of resources for those facilities and services;
- Develop and enforce standards for the coordination of public transportation services in the region, including investment, service, fare policies, and coordination and approval of each transit systems six-year plan;
- Develop and enforce standards for the coordination of regional traffic operations on roadways of regional significance including investment in capital and operations;
- Appoint a District Policy Advisory Committee and approve all elements of the regional transportation improvement program developed by the advisory committee;
- Assume governance of the Regional Transportation Investment District and the Regional Transit Authority in January 2007; and
- Determine by January 2010 the role of the Council in governing the City Transportation Authority (Monorail) and implement the recommendation.

The Council is required to appoint a District Policy Advisory Committee (Committee) made up of local elected officials, officials of agencies that operate major transportation modes, appropriate state officials, and others as appropriate. The Committee may, with approval of the Council, change its membership at any time. The Committee is to provide a regional forum for officials to assess transportation policies, evaluate needs and recommend to the Council a recommended regional plan and a regional transportation improvement program. The Committee duties also include review of the consistency of public agencies' plans with standards of coordination for public transportation and traffic operations.

An auditor for the Puget Sound Regional Transportation District is to be elected November 2005, for a four-year term. The auditor's duties are to investigate operations of the district, including financial and performance auditing functions. The auditor must be a certified public accountant or a certified internal auditor and is precluded from service as a councilor for four years after serving as auditor.

Council members may not be an elected officer of the state or a local government. Disqualifications and replacement for offices are specified and councilors are limited to three terms and the president is limited to two full terms. Councilor and auditor salaries are established.

The Transportation Improvement Board is to give preference to Transportation Improvement Account and Urban Arterial Trust Account funds apportioned for projects in the district that meet the public transportation and traffic coordination criteria developed by the Council.

The requirements that the Transportation Policy Board of the Puget Sound Regional Council have membership of the Transportation Commission and of the three largest port districts, and one-half of the members being from transit agencies, is eliminated.

The Secretary of State is directed to submit this act to the district electorate at the next general election for approval or rejection.

Second Substitute Bill Compared to Engrossed Substitute Bill:

All provisions relating to the creation and implementation of the Transportation District were added; the engrossed substitute bill directed the Legislative Transportation Committee to study whether a directly elected board would enhance transportation governance.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on January 27, 2004.

Effective Date of Second Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 30 days after the November 2004 general election if the act is approved by the voters in the region, except for sections 408 through 411, relating to regional transportation planning organizations, which, if approved, take effect January 1, 2006.

Testimony For: The bill provides for directly elected officials to be responsible for transportation governance and more integrated planning in the Puget Sound area. Language should be clarified that the Department of Transportation should set the level of service standards for state highways within the region.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Charlie Howard, Department of Transportation.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.