

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1960

As Passed House:

March 19, 2003

Title: An act relating to regional transportation governance.

Brief Description: Studying regional transportation governance.

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/24/03, 3/10/03 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/19/03, 98-0.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Directs the Legislative Transportation Committee to study the desirability of creating a directly elected board to oversee transportation planning and governance in the Puget Sound region.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 23 members: Representatives Murray, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Simpson, Vice Chair; Ericksen, Ranking Minority Member; Jarrett, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Bailey, Campbell, Clibborn, Cooper, Dickerson, Flannigan, Hankins, Hatfield, Hudgins, Lovick, Morris, Nixon, Romero, Shabro, Sullivan, Wood and Woods.

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

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 Engrossed Substitute Bill:

Subject to legislative funding, the Legislative Transportation Committee is directed to study whether the creation of a Puget Sound regional transportation district governed by a directly elected board would lead to better use of transportation resources and improved planning and governance in the Puget Sound region. The study is to review current transportation planning in the region, address the interaction of local governments and regional transportation planning agencies, delegation of state transportation planning to the region, governance of the Regional Transportation Investment District by the directly elected board, and governance of local transit districts in the region.

The Legislative Transportation Committee is to submit its report to the Legislature by December 10, 2003.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The proposal would improve coordination among the numerous agencies responsible for transportation planning and services in the central Puget Sound region. It would provide direct accountability to the voters for transportation plans and coordination.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Murray, prime sponsor; and Kevin Shively, Transportation Choices Coalition.

(Information only) Andy Cotugno, METRO-Portland, Oregon; and Mary McCumber, Puget Sound Regional Council.