

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1960

As Reported by House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to regional transportation governance.

Brief Description: Governing regional transportation.

Sponsors: Representatives Murray, Jarrett, Cooper, Dickerson and Hudgins.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

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

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates a seven-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 to the Puget Sound Regional District Council.

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 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 seven elected members and assumes the functions of the metropolitan planning organization and regional transportation planning organization functions of the Council.

By July 1, 2005, the county legislative authority members of King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap counties are required to define six 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 three councilors receiving the most votes are elected to four-year terms, with the remaining three 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 transportation planning function and the regional transportation planning function of the region and develop levels of service standards for highways of statewide significance;
- Identify transportation facilities and services of the Department of Transportation, cities, counties, and public transportation providers that serve regionally significant corridors or are regionally significant and adopt a plan for allocation of resources for those facilities and services. Interlocal agreements are permitted for affected agencies to reimburse the Council for planning costs;
- 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 operations resources;
- Appoint a District Policy Advisory Committee;
- Approve all elements of the regional transportation improvement program developed by the District Policy Advisory Committee; and
- Assume governance of the Regional Transportation Investment District.

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 auditors' 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.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Provisions are added that when the council acts as the governing authority for a Regional Transportation Investment District, its members votes are prorated for the proportion of population of the investment district with each of their councilor districts.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: 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.

