
Transportation Committee

HB 2808

Brief Description: Authorizing a pilot project for high-occupancy toll lanes.

Sponsors: Representatives Murray, Jarrett, Hankins, Wallace, Hudgins, Cooper, Hunter, Moeller, Sullivan and Dickerson.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes a pilot High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes project on State Route 167.
- Utilizes the High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes with HOVs free and single occupancy vehicles paying a toll based on time of day and traffic congestion.
- Project must be started within four years and can be in place for a maximum of four years.

Hearing Date: 1/26/04

Staff: Gene Baxstrom (786-7303).

Background:

High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes are highway lanes reserved part-time or full-time for vehicles carrying a minimum number of occupants. The object of these lanes is to facilitate the operation of transit vehicles and other multi-occupant vehicles, allowing them to avoid congestion and providing those vehicles with improved travel times. There are currently over 200 miles of HOV lanes in operation in the central Puget Sound area. During certain periods HOV lanes are operating below capacity, while adjacent general purpose lanes are congested.

High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes are lanes that are open to carpools, vanpools transit vehicles, and toll-paying single occupant vehicles. The goal for establishing these lanes is to provide a higher level of service for multi-occupant vehicles, while permitting single occupant vehicles to use surplus capacity in the lane by paying a toll. The HOT lanes have been employed in several corridors in California.

The Transportation Commission has authority to designate HOV lanes on state highways. It does not, however, have the authority to designate HOT lanes and impose charges for the use of those lanes. The Transportation Commission as part of its evaluation of HOV lanes directed the Department of Transportation (DOT) to evaluate the feasibility of converting a portion of the HOV

lane system to HOT lanes. The DOT staff identified a portion of State Route 167 as the best candidate to implement a HOT lane pilot project.

Summary of Bill:

The DOT is directed to establish and operate a HOT lane pilot project along nine miles of State Route 167 within King County. Tolls on the project are to be established by the Transportation Commission and may vary in amount by time of day, level of traffic congestion, vehicle occupancy or other criteria. The DOT is to report annually to the Transportation Commission and the legislature on the project including its operational efficiency, effectiveness for transit, revenue usefulness, and impacts on all highway users.

Construction of the facilities to implement the toll project must begin within four years or the HOT lane pilot authority expires and the toll project operational period is limited to a period of four years.

The HOV lanes are designated as restricted access and persons may only drive a vehicle onto or from the roadway at entrances and exists established by the DOT. Those lanes must be delineated by a double white traffic line, barrier, or other traffic control device. Violation of the restricted access portion of a HOV lane is a traffic infraction.

The HOT lanes operations account is created in the custody of the state treasurer. Interest on the account accrues to the account.

The personally identifying information of persons using transponders to facilitate payment of tolls is exempted from the public disclosure but the information may be disclosed in aggregate. Law enforcement agencies may only access personally identifying information for toll enforcement purposes, except by court order.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 22, 2004.

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