
Transportation Committee

ESSB 5538

Brief Description: Electing regional transit authority board members.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Highways & Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Esser, Prentice, Rossi, Benton, Finkbeiner, Johnson, T. Sheldon, Roach, Schmidt and Oke).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Effective with the November 2003 election, Sound Transit is governed by a nine member elected board.
- Light rail contracts for work in King county may not be signed until the new board is in effect.

Hearing Date: 4/4/03

Staff: Gene Baxstrom (786-7303).

Background:

The King, Pierce, and Snohomish County Councils voted in 1993 to establish the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (now known as Sound Transit). Sound Transit is vested with high capacity transportation system development authority in the three county area, including the imposition of voter-approved taxes for development and operation of such transportation systems. In 1996 voters in the urban areas of King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties approved a plan and authorized funding to provide high capacity transportation services for the Central Puget Sound Region. The current Sound Transit Board is composed of 18 appointed members who are city and county elected officials, with the exception of the Secretary of the Washington State Department of Transportation.

Summary of Bill:

Effective on the date of certification of the general elections of 2003, a regional transit authority board must be composed of nine elected members. The members are elected from nine separate electoral districts in the authority area. The positions are nonpartisan positions. A five-member district commission must be appointed by the Governor to establish the

electoral districts, which must be drawn to ensure nearly equal populations. An appointed regional transit authority board may not implement a light rail system in a county with a population over 1.5 million persons, except to retire debt or honor contractual obligations, if any, relative to the light rail system.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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