

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5937

As Passed House:

April 9, 2003

Title: An act relating to additions to the scenic and recreational highway system.

Brief Description: Adding to the scenic and recreational highway system.

Sponsors: By Senators Parlette, Jacobsen, Haugen, Sheahan and Shin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 4/2/03 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 4/9/03, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- The U.S. 97 Scenic Byway and the Palouse Country Scenic Byway are designated as State Scenic Byways.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 29 members: Representatives Murray, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Simpson, Vice Chair; Ericksen, Ranking Minority Member; Jarrett, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Armstrong, Bailey, Campbell, Clibborn, Cooper, Dickerson, Edwards, Flannigan, Hankins, Hatfield, Hudgins, Kristiansen, Lovick, Mielke, Morris, Nixon, Romero, Schindler, Shabro, Sullivan, Wallace, Wood and Woods.

Staff: Reema Griffith (786-7301).

Background:

In 1967 the Legislature enacted the Scenic and Recreational Highway Act. The provisions of the act establish the state scenic and recreational highway system, as well as provide a framework in which the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has used as the basis for the creation of a state program.

Under current law, the WSDOT is directed to establish criteria for assessing scenic byways, and to develop a nomination and application process for the designation of byways. Any person may nominate a roadway, path, or trail for inclusion in the program. The WSDOT must submit its recommendations to the Transportation Commission (Commission). The Commission may make official designations for local scenic byways, but may only make interim designations for state scenic byways. Per statute, the Legislature must approve designations for state scenic byways in order for it to become official.

In determining if a byway would be a good candidate for designation, the WSDOT looks for six resource qualities and their local, regional, or national significance. The six qualities they look for are: scenic resources; natural resources; recreational resources; historic resources; cultural resources; and archeological resources. A byway candidate does not have to possess all six qualities, but rather must possess at least one in order to be considered further.

Some of the benefits associated with receiving scenic highway designation are: gaining eligibility to apply for National Scenic Byway funding; increased opportunity to stimulate local tourism; gaining eligibility to receive technical support from the State and Federal Scenic Byway Program; and provides a process to plan for tourism impacts on a corridor.

There are currently 56 portions of state highways designated as part of the scenic and recreational highway system. In 2002 the Commission made interim scenic byway designations for the U.S. 97 Scenic Byway and the Palouse Country Scenic Byway.

Summary of Bill:

The U.S. 97 Scenic Byway and the Palouse Country Scenic Byway are designated in statute as State Scenic Byways.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The designation of state highways as scenic byways creates an opportunity for local jurisdictions to stimulate economic development and tourism which is critical to the state's economy. The areas in the bill seeking designation will benefit greatly from the passage of this bill.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Parlette, prime sponsor; Judy Lorenzo, Department of Transportation; and Robin Pollard, Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development.