

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5987

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Highways & Transportation, March 6, 2003

Title: An act relating to the roles and responsibilities of transportation agencies.

Brief Description: Delineating the roles and responsibilities of transportation agencies.

Sponsors: Senators Swecker, Haugen, Horn, Jacobsen, Prentice, Esser, Oke and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Highways & Transportation: 3/6/03 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5987 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Horn, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Swecker, Vice Chair; Esser, Finkbeiner, Haugen, Jacobsen, Kastama, Mulliken, Oke, Prentice and Spanel.

Staff: Michael Groesch (786-7434)

Background: The Washington Transportation Commission is a seven-member board appointed by the Governor, and confirmed by the Senate for six-year terms. The commission is the policy oversight board for the Department of Transportation. The commission appoints the Secretary of Transportation, although the secretary may only be terminated for limited causes. The commission establishes tolls for bridges, ferries, and other facilities; authorizes the sale of bonds; adopts a state transportation policy plan; and adopts a comprehensive six-year investment program. The commission also approves and proposes to the Governor and Legislature a budget for the Department of Transportation. The commission adopts rules, regulations, and policy directives as necessary and is a member of the executive board of the Puget Sound Regional Council. The Secretary of Transportation is an ex-officio member of the Transportation Commission and its chief executive officer. The secretary is also the chief executive officer of the Washington Department of Transportation and has the authority to organize the department, establish districts, execute the budget, and hire staff.

The Legislative Transportation Committee (LTC) is a statutory committee within the legislative branch of government. The membership consists of 12 members from both the House and Senate. LTC meets during the interims between legislative sessions to conduct studies and research on transportation issues; to develop and provide legislative oversight on transportation policies; and to monitor the execution of the transportation budget.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The appointment of the Secretary of Transportation by the Transportation Commission is made at the pleasure of the commission. The authority of the commission over other powers and duties of the secretary is also clarified. Adoption of the Washington Transportation Plan is subject to legislative approval. Provisions are made so

that regional transportation plans and transportation improvement plans will be consistent with the statewide transportation plan. The Legislative Transportation Committee is directed to establish four workgroups dealing with the development of the workplan for the next Washington Transportation Plan, revisions to transportation budgets, the definition of highways of statewide significance and the implementation personnel, and contracting provisions under the Personnel Reform Act of 2002. Revisions are made to the budget and accounting statutes to define the transportation budget and distinguish the transportation budget from the omnibus operating and capital budgets.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The LTC workgroup on the budget is modified to include representatives from the Transportation Commission and OFM. Other changes are technical in nature.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: The bill will strengthen the relationship between the commission and the Legislature leading to improved transportation policy. The provision regarding the hiring of the secretary is appropriate and fair. The bill provides for improved definitions and delineates exacting roles for the commission.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Connie Niva, Washington Transportation Commission; Rick Olson, Puget Sound Regional Council.