

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 6701

As Passed Senate, February 13, 2004

Title: An act relating to distribution of SAFETEA funds.

Brief Description: Distributing SAFETEA funds.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Highways & Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Horn and Haugen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Highways & Transportation: 2/3/04, 2/9/04 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 2/13/04, 47-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6701 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Horn, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Swecker, Vice Chair; Esser, Haugen, Jacobsen, Kastama, Murray, Oke, Poulsen and Spanel.

Staff: Greg Doss (786-7341)

Background: Every six years, the federal government authorizes a Surface Transportation Act that provides programmatic funding and direct distributions to the states. In 1998, the Federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) provided Washington State with a six-year total of \$369 million in flexible funds. Unlike other federal transportation funding, flexible funds have no expenditure restrictions. The state formed a steering committee of state and local stakeholders to distribute the flexible funds.

The steering committee allocated funds as follows: 24 percent to a statewide competitive grant program; 38 percent to the Department of Transportation; 19 percent by population to Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs), counties and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs); and 19 percent in state grants for Rural Economic Vitality Projects.

Summary of Bill: The bill assumes that Congress will soon pass a new Surface Transportation Act that includes flexible funds. Flexible funding is distributed as it was distributed under TEA-21, except that the state Rural Economic Vitality Grant Program is replaced with a Freight Investment Program. If SSB 6680 does not become law, its freight program and corresponding criteria is created in SSB 6701.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The Governor would prefer to have a steering committee decide how future Surface Transportation Act Flexible funds are distributed. Distributions of flexible funding should be balanced against specific earmarks for freight projects or programs.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Andrew Johnsen, Governor's Office.