
Transportation Committee

HB 2124

Brief Description: Increasing state participation in public transportation service and planning.

Sponsors: Representatives Murray, Jarrett, Simpson, Hudgins, Upthegrove, Sells, Wallace, Dickerson, B. Sullivan, Moeller, Kenney and Hasegawa.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the Office of Transit Mobility in the Department of Transportation.
- The purpose of the Office is to coordinate transit service and planning and to maximize opportunities for using public transportation to increase corridor efficiency.
- The Regional Mobility Steering Committee is created to distribute federal funds.
- The Committee has 11 members appointed by the Executive and 4 non-voting legislative members.

Hearing Date: 2/22/05

Staff: Beth Redfield (786-7347).

Background:

Within the Department of Transportation, the Division of Public Transportation and Rail has responsibility for providing financial and technical assistance to local transit agencies. The Division also provides support and planning for passenger rail and freight rail, including subsidies for AMTRAK Cascade Services.

State grant funding for local public transportation is about \$42 million in the 2003-05 biennium. This represents about 1% of transit agency revenue. State funds provide support for special needs services, rural mobility for areas without transit services, trip reduction grants and vanpools. The Division also administers federal grant funds for rural public transportation, elderly and disabled service grants, intercity service, and reverse commute for job access.

Together with DOT's Urban Planning Office, the Public Transportation Division represents the DOT in discussions with local and regional transportation planning and service agencies. They also provide coordinated system planning through the Washington Transportation Plan.

There are 26 transit systems currently operating in Washington State. Transit agencies plan on a six year cycle and plans must show how they will fund program needs. Regional transportation planning organizations plan for the long term, providing guidance for transit investments.

Currently, statewide flexible funds apportioned to Washington State under the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, or TEA-21, are distributed by a steering committee convened by the Governor.

Summary of Bill:

The Office of Transit Mobility is created in the Department of Transportation. The Director of the Office shall report directly to the Secretary.

The primary goals of the Office of Transit Mobility are to connect and coordinate transit services and planning, and to maximize opportunities to use public transportation to improve the efficiency of transportation corridors.

The duties of the Office include:

1. Developing a statewide strategic plan that creates common goals for transit agencies and reduces competing plans for cross-jurisdictional service;
2. Developing a park and ride lot program;
3. Encouraging long-range transit planning;
4. Providing public transportation expertise to improve linkages between regional transportation planning organizations and transit agencies;
5. Strengthening policies for inclusion of transportation demand management strategies in route development and corridor plan standards; and
6. Providing staff assistance to the regional mobility steering committee established in section 4 of this act.

In forming the Office, the Secretary is directed to use existing resources to the greatest extent possible. Specifically, the Office of Transit Mobility shall take over functions as appropriate from the Division of Public Transportation and Rail and the Urban Planning Office.

The Office is directed to establish measurable performance objectives for evaluating the success of its initiatives and progress toward accomplishing the overall goals of the office. The Office will be subject to review by the Transportation Performance Audit Board (TPAB).

Local and regional transportation agencies are directed to adopt common transportation goals. The Office of Transit Mobility is given the responsibility to review local and regional plans to ensure the efficient integration of multi-modal and multi-jurisdictional planning.

The Regional Mobility Steering Committee is created. It is composed of 11 voting members and 4 non-voting legislative members. The 11 members are as follows: the Secretary of DOT or his designee, the Director of the Transportation Improvement Board or his designee, and nine members appointed by the Governor. The appointees include two representatives of transit agencies, from an urban and a rural area; one representative from port districts; one representative

of nonmotorized transportation interests; one representative from a regional transportation planning organization; two representatives of counties, from large and small population counties; and two representatives from cities, from large and small population cities.

The Regional Mobility Steering Committee will distribute federal surface transportation program funds made available under the successor act to TEA-21.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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