

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHB 1429

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 27, 2006

Title: An act relating to authorizing personal rapid transit and magnetic levitation transit systems.

Brief Description: Authorizing personal rapid transit and magnetic levitation transit systems.

Sponsors: Representatives Dickerson, Ericksen, Murray, Linville, B. Sullivan, Lovick, Talcott, Campbell, Chase, Nixon and Simpson.

Brief History: Passed House: 1/18/06, 92-4.

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/27/06 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Vice Chair; Benson, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Eide, Esser, Finkbeiner, Mulliken, Oke, Sheldon, Spanel, Swecker and Weinstein.

Staff: Dory On (786-7321)

Background: In the early 1990s, high-capacity transportation (HTC) systems were authorized to offer public transportation services within certain urbanized regions. The services are to provide a higher level of passenger capacity, speed, and service frequency. Transit agencies, which include city-owned transit systems, county transportation authorities, metropolitan municipal corporations, and public transportation benefit areas, are responsible for planning, construction, and operations.

Only transit agencies in counties with a population of 175,000 or more that have an interstate highway within their borders, except for any county having a population of more than one million or a county that has a population of more than 400,000 and is adjacent to a county with a population of one million or more, may operate a HTC system.

Besides any available federal, state, local, and private sector assistance, the HTC agencies may use the following dedicated voter approved funding sources: employer tax, and sales and use tax.

The HTC systems are defined in statute as rapid rail system, monorail, trolley, or other fixed rail guideway. Magnetic levitation and personal rapid transit, relatively new technologies, are not in that definition.

Magnetic levitation (maglev) is a system in which magnetic force lifts, propels, and guides a vehicle over a guideway at speeds of 250 to 300 miles per hour. The concept of magnetically levitated trains was first identified around 1900, but significant advancements in maglev technology did not occur until relatively recently. While Germany and Japan have spent

significant amounts of time and money developing maglev technology over the last several decades, comparatively little research was performed in the United States until the 1990s when the National Maglev Initiative was established.

To evaluate the potential for maglev to improve intercity transportation and to determine an appropriate role for the federal government, the "Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century" (TEA 21) was passed in 1998, which created a National Magnetic Levitation Technology Deployment Program.

Summary of Bill: Provisions related to high-capacity transportation systems are expanded to include magnetic levitation and personal rapid transit systems.

Counties implementing magnetic levitation and personal rapid transit system are: 1) authorized to impose by a simple voter majority, dedicated funding sources already allowed in statute for other high capacity systems; 2) exempt from the population requirements in the existing high-capacity transportation statutes; and 3) authorized to use public-private partnerships.

The Department of Transportation (Department) will develop, implement, and administer a grant program for state and federal funding identified for magnetic levitation and personal rapid transit systems. The Speaker of the House will appoint four representatives, two from each caucus; the President of the Senate will appoint four senators, two from each caucus; and the Governor will appoint a business person and a person with academic credentials in magnetic levitation and personal rapid transit systems to work with the Department to develop the criteria for the grant program. Applicant entities must submit design proposals to the Department in order to compete for grants under the program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on August 1, 2006.

Testimony For: Magnetic levitation systems are fast, efficient, sustainable, less expensively expandable, user friendly and federally supported high-capacity transportation systems. This bill would empower smaller communities to better control their transportation needs, provide for public-private partnerships, and allow access to funding for magnetic levitation systems.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Representative Mary Lou Dickerson, Prime Sponsor; Jim Henry, Poulsbo City Council; Jo Klinski, Magna Force, Inc.; Jake Solomon, Regional MagLev and Personal Rapid Transit Mobility.