

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2871

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

Title: An act relating to regional transportation governance.

Brief Description: Modifying regional transportation governance provisions.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Murray, Dickerson, Appleton and Simpson).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/21/06, 71-26.

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/24/06, 2/27/06 [DPA, DNP, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Jacobsen, Vice Chair; Poulsen, Vice Chair; Berkey, Eide, Kastama, Oke, Sheldon, Spanel and Weinstein.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Benton and Esser.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Finkbeiner and Mulliken.

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

Background: Currently, many local transportation entities either exist or are available under current law within the central Puget Sound region for the purpose of planning, funding, constructing, and/or operating transportation projects and services. The degree of coordination between the entities varies throughout the region. Some of the entities include:

- cities;
- counties;
- local transit districts;
- city transportation authorities (e.g., Seattle Popular Monorail Authority);
- regional transit authorities (e.g., Sound Transit);
- regional transportation investment districts (RTID); and
- regional transportation planning organizations (e.g., Puget Sound Regional Council).

Additionally, the final recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation, submitted December 1, 2000, included Recommendation #6: *"Provide regions with the ability to plan, select, fund, and implement (or contract for implementation of) projects identified to meet the region's transportation and land use goals."*

Summary of Amended Bill: The Regional Transportation Commission (Commission) is created to develop options for a regional transportation governance proposal to be submitted to

the 2007 Legislature. The Commission is comprised of seven voting members, appointed by the Governor, with the Secretary of Transportation, or his/her designee, as a nonvoting member. As one of its options, the Commission must, at a minimum, develop a proposal for formation of a permanent regional transportation governing entity, to be majority directly elected, as well as the governing entity's authorized revenue sources and planning authority.

Various changes are made to the RTID statutes concerning, among other things, the designation of district boundaries, adjustments to certain revenue options, project eligibility requirements, and ballot title restrictions. Additionally, if no RTID is formed by December 1, 2007, then individual counties within the region may create a RTID separately.

Various changes were made requiring a RTID and a Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) to coordinate activities, including requiring both entities to submit their respective plans to the voters at the same election, up until December 1, 2007.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) must reach agreements with local communities to address mitigation issues prior to commencing the 520 bridge project. The WSDOT must also designate the preferred alternative and complete other environmental planning and project finance requirements on both the SR 520 and Alaskan Way Viaduct (AWV) projects prior to any public vote on a regional transportation ballot measure. However, the WSDOT may proceed with utility relocation work on the AWV project and pontoon construction on the SR 520 project without meeting this requirement.

Existing Transportation Benefit District (TBD) law is expanded to include the three-county central Puget Sound region. Counties or cities within the region may create a TBD in order to raise voter-approved revenues for transportation projects on a state or regional transportation plan, including transit operations. Restrictions on TBD boundaries and the amount of funds available for local highway projects are removed.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: The Committee striking amendment does the following:

- Removes the prohibition on a 2006 ballot;
- Requires a RTID & Sound Transit to go to the ballot at the same time, until December 1, 2007;
- Revises the RTID project eligibility requirements;
- Exempts the peninsula area west of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge from a RTID area;
- Allows Sound Transit to annex area as part of its region-wide vote to support additional phases of its system and financing plan;
- Removes the requirement that a RTID plan be adopted by participating counties by ordinance;
- Increases the RTID motor vehicle excise tax rate from 0.6% to 0.8%;
- Maintains the RTID sales tax rate at 0.5%;
- Removes the transfer of the Monorail taxes to the City of Seattle;
- Allows for flexible TBD boundaries;
- Allows for a single-county RTID after December 1, 2007, if no multi-county RTID is in existence by that time; and
- Revises the composition and the duties of the Regional Transportation Commission.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: Yes.

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Testimony For: The bill attempts to provide the RTID with its requested legislative fixes. The region needs more flexibility. Existing plans are done in isolation and should be better integrated. The Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation recommended more multimodal transportation services. Other cities provide examples of the adoption of successful regional transportation funding and operating systems. Allowing the region to use existing Transportation Benefit District options would be helpful. This legislation strikes a balance between the various interests.

Testimony Against: None.

Testimony Other: Pursuing a 2006 ballot should not be prohibited. The language requiring that certain planning conditions be met before work may proceed on the SR 520 & Viaduct projects is problematic. The requirements outlined for the regional transportation commission are overly prescriptive. The RTID's local option gas tax should only be permitted if the RTID contains boundaries identical to a county or counties. Transportation planning and construction implementation should be separated. It is premature to give the RTID transit operating authority.

Who Testified: PRO: Representative Murray, Sponsor; Dave Gossett, RTID Executive Board; Julie Sexton, WA Assn. of Counties; Clifford Traisman, WA Conservation Voters & WA Environmental Council; Kaleen Cottingham, Futurewise; Craig Engelking, Sierra Club; Genesee Adkins, Transportation Choices Coalition; Peter Thein, WA State Transit Assn.

OTHER: Phil Noble, ETP/City of Bellevue; Mary Alyce Burleigh, ETP/City of Kirkland; Pam Carter, SKATE Board (City of Tukwila); Ed Steiner, Seashore Subarea; Doug Levy, Cities of Everett, Kent, Federal Way, Renton, & Puyallup; Greg Hannon, Western States Petroleum Assn.; John Niles & Rich Harkness, self & CETA; Joni Earl, Sound Transit; Ashley Probart, Assn. of WA Cities; Dave Overstreet, AAA of WA.