

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6599

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 2, 2006

Title: An act relating to central Puget Sound regional transportation governance and funding.

Brief Description: Modifying central Puget Sound regional transportation governance and funding.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, Berkey, Weinstein, Poulsen and Deccio.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/19/06, 2/2/06 [DPS, DNP, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6599 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Benton.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator 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; 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 Substitute Bill: A Central Puget Sound Regional Transportation Governance Commission must be appointed by the Governor to develop a proposal that, among other things, establishes a single point of accountability for a transportation funding and operating system within the central Puget Sound region. The Commission must include seven appointed members having expertise in certain areas, with the Secretary of Transportation also represented as a nonvoting member. The Commission must submit its proposal to the Legislature by December 1, 2006, in order that appropriate enabling statutes may be enacted. The proposal must then be submitted to regional voters at the 2007 general election ballot.

The Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) and the Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) must coordinate their activities, including establishing identical boundaries and submitting a coordinated project list and plan to regional voters as a common ballot measure. The project list and plan must be consistent with the regional transportation plan adopted by the Puget Sound Regional Council. The common ballot measure requires that both the RTID and Sound Transit proposals must pass at the ballot before either may be implemented.

Various changes are made to the RTID statutes concerning, among other things, the designation of district boundaries, adjustments to certain revenue options, and ballot title restrictions.

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.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Additional changes were made to existing RTID statutes to reflect recommendations made to the Legislature by the RTID planning committee executive board.

The prohibition on going to the 2006 ballot was removed.

The jurisdictions to which existing TBD law applies were expanded.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: Yes.

Effective Date: Various effective dates exist. Refer to the bill.

Testimony For: This bill is a draft and is intended to start the discussion around what can be accomplished this session regarding regional transportation funding and governance in the central Puget Sound region.

Testimony Against: None.

Testimony Other: Some of the changes to the RTID statutes in the bill are the ones requested over the years by the RTID planning committee executive board and are supported by the

RTID; however, changes should be added to allow the state to issue bonds reimbursed by RTID revenues and to have the state cover the RTID's election costs. Governance reform is a good idea to discuss, but the timing of the commission delays the plan too long; the Legislature should pass a governance reform proposal this session. Regional governance reform should be targeted and not overly expansive. Funding options should be flexible, the district should be allowed to draw appropriate boundaries, and the definition of the permitted types of projects should be expanded. A fairer motor vehicle excise tax depreciation schedule should be adopted in the event a regional district chose to impose the tax. The 2006 general election ballot option should not be removed. Local transit agencies may have concerns with a generalized consolidation proposal.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Haugen, Sponsor; Pat Jacobsen, CEO of Translink, Vancouver, B.C.

OTHER: Shawn Bunney & Gary Nelson, RTID; Robert Klein, Municipal League of King Co.; Charlie Howard, Puget Sound Regional Council; Genesis Adkins, Transportation Choices Coalition; John Wolfe, Port of Tacoma; Peter Thein, WA State Transit Assoc.; Kaleen Cottingham, Futurewise.

Signed in, Unable to Testify & Submitted Written Testimony: Ron Sims, King County Executive.