

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESSB 6800

C 334 L 06

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Refining the roles of the transportation commission and department of transportation.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Haugen, Jacobsen and Rockefeller; by request of Governor Gregoire).

Senate Committee on Transportation

House Committee on Transportation

Background: During the 2005 legislation session, ESB 5513 was enacted restructuring statewide transportation governance. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) was made a cabinet level agency and the Secretary of Transportation was appointed by the Governor, serving at the pleasure of the Governor. The Secretary assumed authority previously directed to the Washington Transportation Commission to propose the WSDOT agency budget and to authorize departmental request legislation.

The commission retained certain authority, including statewide transportation planning, bond issuance approval, serving as the state's tolling authority, setting ferry fares, and sharing responsibility for project selection and funding. Additionally, the commission received an expanded role as a public forum for transportation policy development.

The Transportation Performance Audit Board (TPAB) was granted separate authority to direct performance audits, and its authority regarding directed agency reviews, and functional and performance audits, was expanded to include certain local transportation entities. However, on November 8, 2005, voters approved Initiative 900 requiring the State Auditor to conduct performance audits of state and local governments, including "state and local transportation governmental entities and each of their agencies, accounts, and programs" I-900 dedicates a percentage of the state sales and use tax for this purpose. Additionally, the 2005 transportation revenue bill (ESSB 6103) authorized the State Auditor to conduct performance audits for transportation-related agencies and appropriated \$4 million for this purpose.

Summary: The roles and responsibilities of WSDOT and the commission are revised.

WSDOT obtains the following responsibilities, in addition to various administrative duties, from the commission: (1) approving bond issuance; and (2) adopting a functional classification of highways, including the designation of highways of statewide significance.

The commission has the following responsibilities (among others):

- adopting the comprehensive and balanced statewide transportation plan, which must reflect the priorities of government developed by the Office of Financial Management, to be approved by the Legislature in the biennial budget;

- developing a comprehensive investment program, including programming and prioritization standards, subject to approval by the Legislature in the biennial budget;
- overseeing the Transportation Innovative Partnership Program, which includes considering recommendations from expert review panels relative to selected projects;
- conducting performance reviews of transportation-related agencies;
- conducting public outreach;
- conducting studies as directed by the Legislature or the Governor;
- setting tolls and ferry fares; and
- recommending to the Governor and the Legislature improvements in certain transportation issue areas.

The composition, and procedures, of the commission are revised as follows: (1) commissioners may be removed by the Governor "for cause"; (2) the Governor, or his/her designee, is added as a nonvoting member; (3) the specific partisan membership limitation is removed; (4) the required minimum number of meeting days is revised; and (5) the maximum number of days for reimbursement of expenses is revised.

The TPAB is repealed.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	39	0	
House	57	4	(House amended)
Senate			(Senate refused to concur)
House	83	1	(House amended)
Senate	43	0	(Senate concurred)

Effective: July 1, 2006