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**Transportation Committee**

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**HB 1396**

**Brief Description:** Providing a single ballot proposition for regional transportation investment districts and regional transit authorities at the 2007 general election.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Flannigan, Jarrett, B. Sullivan, Upthegrove, Rodne, Eddy, Kagi, Chase and Schual-Berke.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires Sound Transit and the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) to submit to regional voters their respective transit and highway improvement plans in the form of a single ballot measure, rather than as two separate ballot measures.
- Maintains the current ballot measure contingency requirement by requiring support of the single measure by both a majority of Sound Transit voters and a majority of RTID voters.
- Provides an expedited review process for any constitutional challenges to the single ballot measure.

**Hearing Date:** 2/1/07

**Staff:** Kathryn Leathers (786-7114).

**Background:**

*Regional Transportation Investment Districts*

In 2002, the Legislature authorized the creation of regional transportation investment districts (RTID) for the purpose of planning and financing regional transportation improvements within a multi-county region. A RTID is required to include at least two contiguous counties, one of which must have a population of over 1,500,000 and any adjoining counties must have a population over 500,000. The boundaries should also include at least the contiguous areas within the regional transit authority serving the counties. The only currently proposed RTID consists of King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties.

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A RTID is granted several local voter-approved funding options to fund the improvements, including a sales and use tax, vehicle license fee, parking tax, motor vehicle excise tax, employer tax, local option fuel tax, and vehicle tolls. Eligible projects include capital improvements to highways of statewide significance, including associated multimodal capital improvements, and, under limited circumstances, certain local street, road, and highway improvements. Additionally, operational expenses (e.g., transit services) are allowed for project construction mitigation related to the RTID-funded projects.

#### *Regional Transit Authorities*

In 1992, the Legislature authorized creation of regional transit authorities (RTA) for the purpose of developing and operating high capacity transportation systems. A RTA must consist of two or more contiguous counties, each having a population of 400,000 persons or more. A high capacity transportation system is an urban public transportation system that operates principally on exclusive rights-of-way and provides a substantially higher level of passenger capacity, speed, and service frequency than traditional public transportation systems operating mainly on general purpose roadways.

In 1993, the King, Pierce, and Snohomish County Councils voted to establish the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (now known as Sound Transit). Sound Transit is vested with high capacity transportation system development authority in the three-county area, including the imposition of voter-approved taxes for development and operation of such transportation systems.

In 1996, voters in the urban areas of King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties approved a plan and authorized funding to provide high capacity transportation services for the central Puget Sound region.

#### *2007 Sound Transit-RTID Joint Ballot*

During the 2006 legislative session, the Legislature enacted ESHB 2871, which requires, among other things, that Sound Transit and the RTID submit to regional voters at the 2007 general election the agencies' respective transit and highway improvement plans. More specifically, the RTID measure must ask the district's voters to approve formation of the district, the investment plan, and the revenue sources necessary to finance the plan. The Sound Transit measure must ask voters within its boundaries to support additional implementation phases of the authority's system and financing plan. The legislation also requires that the measures be single, separate ballot measures. Furthermore, passage of each measure was made contingent on the passage of the other measure, thereby requiring both ballot measures to pass in order for either to pass.

#### **Summary of Bill:**

At the 2007 general election, Sound Transit and the RTID must submit to regional voters their respective transit and highway improvement plans in the form of a single ballot proposition, rather than as two separate ballot measures. In order for the proposition to pass, a majority of voters in the Sound Transit taxing district must vote in favor of the measure, and, likewise, a majority of the voters in the RTID taxing district must also vote in favor of the measure. The text of the ballot proposition is codified in statute, and requires that the ballot measure submitted to the voters take substantially the same form as the codified language. In addition, the ballot measure must include language stating that each taxing district may only impose taxes within its respective boundaries. An expedited appeal process is provided for any constitutional challenges to the bill. Finally, an emergency clause is included, making the bill effective immediately.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect immediately.