
Transportation Committee

HB 1815

Brief Description: Preserving rail facilities and railroads by retaining and reusing rail and crossing material.

Sponsors: Representatives Wallace, Curtis, Jarrett, Chandler, Lovick, Newhouse, Sells, Fromhold, Eddy, Kenney, Haigh, Linville and Moeller.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a pilot project and grant program within the Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to award or fund rail and crossing materials to in-state rail operators or public or privately-owned short line or main line rail facilities.

Hearing Date: 2/19/07

Staff: Teresa Berntsen (786-7301).

Background:

State funds are provided for rail infrastructure through programs administered by two agencies: the Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB).

- The WSDOT's Freight Rail Capital sub-program provides funding in the form of financial assistance to freight rail systems and to preserve local freight rail service. The Passenger Rail Capital sub-program provides funding for the state's investment in the capital components of passenger rail.
- The FMSIB selects and prioritizes freight mobility projects and makes funding recommendations to the Legislature. Funding for FMSIB recommended projects has historically been included in WSDOT's Highways and Local Programs budget.

Funding for rail has historically been provided through a mix of state, federal, and local funding.

When the state provides funding to repair or upgrade an existing rail line, some materials that are replaced may be used for other state-funded projects.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature finds that there are insufficient resources to address rail infrastructure needs, and that it is the intent of the Legislature to retain and reuse rail material to restore, preserve, or enhance rail facilities.

The Rail Preservation Pilot Project is created within the WSDOT. The WSDOT must establish eligibility criteria to award rail and crossing materials to in-state rail operators or owners of public or privately-owned short line or main line rail facilities. If public funds are used to improve, replace, or enhance a rail facility, the WSDOT must offer any rail and crossing materials removed from the facility to another rail improvement project in the state.

The WSDOT must establish the Rail Material Reuse Grant Program. The program is to provide grants and technical assistance to in-state rail operators or owners of public or privately-owned short line or main line rail facilities. Grants may only be to acquire, remove, and transport reusable rail and crossing materials.

The Rail Preservation Fund is created. All monies from federal or state grants and loans received by the WSDOT for rail improvement projects must be deposited into the fund. The fund may retain its earnings from investments. Expenditures from the fund may only be used to supply in-state rail operators or owners of public or privately owned short line and main line rail facilities with rail crossing materials.

The Act expires six years after the effective date of the Act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.