
Transportation Committee

HB 2139

Brief Description: Addressing transportation policy goals.

Sponsors: Representative Simpson.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes five overarching policy goals for the investment in and for the planning, operation, and performance of the state's transportation system.
- To support achievement of the newly-established policy goals, the Department of Transportation's role in transportation planning is modified to require that it perform certain duties in relation to each transportation project and to the transportation system.

Hearing Date: 2/22/07

Staff: Kathryn Leathers (786-7114).

Background:

Over the years, the Legislature has adopted numerous goals, objectives, and benchmarks applicable to the state's transportation system. Responding to a recommendation made by the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation to adopt transportation benchmarks, the 2002 Legislature stated its intent that policy goals must be created for the investment in, and operation and performance of, the state's transportation system.

In 2005, the Legislature directed the Transportation Performance Audit Board (TPAB) to, among other things, study and make recommendations for modifying existing transportation goals and benchmarks. During the 2006 interim, the Joint Transportation Committee continued the work begun by the TPAB by commissioning a report to make specific recommendations for aligning benchmarks and goals, and adjusting reporting requirements. This recently completed report recommends revising and streamlining various existing state transportation system goals, objectives, and responsibilities, and the process by which these elements are measured and reported on.

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.

The Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has broad authority to exercise all necessary powers to perform duties related to planning, locating, designing constructing, improving, repairing, operating, and maintaining highways, including bridges. The WSDOT is required to use an environmental review as part of a project analysis to identify potential environment impacts and mitigation.

The WSDOT's role in transportation planning includes ongoing coordination and development of statewide transportation policies; ongoing development of a statewide multimodal transportation plan; coordinating the state high-capacity transportation planning and regional transportation planning programs; and conducting special transportation planning studies.

Summary of Bill:

The state's policy goals for the investment in and the planning, operation, performance of the state's transportation system are streamlined into the following five policy goals:

- *Preservation:* To maintain, preserve, and extend the life and utility of prior investments in transportation systems and services.
- *Safety:* To provide for and improve the safety and security of transportation customers and the transportation system;
- *Mobility:* To improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout Washington State;
- *Environment:* To enhance Washington' quality of life through transportation investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities, and protect the environment; and
- *Stewardship:* To be effective managers of the transportation system.

To support achievement of the newly-established policy goals, the WSDOT's role in transportation planning is modified to specifically require that it:

- maintain an inventory and analysis of the condition of structures and corridors;
- develop long-term financing plans that support ongoing maintenance and preservation of the transportation system;
- accommodate and balance the safety and convenience of all users of the system;
- seek a reduction in per capita vehicle miles traveled;
- assess each project's estimated total carbon emissions over the full projected life cycle of the project, and include in each project analysis a list of alternative approaches that would result in fewer carbon emissions;
- to the greatest extent possible, utilize efficiency tools like high-occupancy vehicle and high occupancy toll lanes; and
- promote integrated multimodal planning.

In addition, the WSDOT is required to evaluate and prioritize projects based on (a) projects that provide the most consistent and efficient movement of goods and people through the transportation system; (b) those structures and corridors in most urgent need of retrofitting or rehabilitation; and (c) those projects that have a lower carbon emission output and encourage a reduction in vehicle miles traveled.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested.

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