
Transportation Committee

SB 5084

Brief Description: Updating rail transit safety plan provisions to comply with federal regulation.

Sponsors: Senators Murray, Swecker, Haugen and Delvin.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Modifies the rail fixed guideway system safety and security plan to comply with federal regulations.
- Requires the Department of Transportation (Department) to set by rule an annual fee for owners and operators of rail fixed guideway systems to defray the Department's costs associated with the plans and related investigations.

Hearing Date: 3/27/07

Staff: Kathryn Leathers (786-7114).

Background:

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requires that states provide oversight of rail fixed guideway system safety. In Washington, the Department is the agency responsible for safety oversight of rail fixed guideway systems.

A "rail fixed guideway system" includes a light, heavy, or rapid rail system; monorail; trolley; or other fixed rail guideway component of a high-capacity transit system that is not regulated by the Federal Railroad Administration or its successor. The FTA regulations exclude trains operating on the interstate rail system. (The Federal Railroad Association separately regulates the interstate rail system.)

Rail transit operators develop safety plans and submit them to the Department for approval. The Department verifies that plans are consistent with federal guidelines, monitors safety reporting requirements, and investigates reported incidents.

Summary of Bill:

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 state requirements for fixed guideway system safety and security plans are modified to comply with updated federal requirements. Specifically, recent changes in federal law require that each rail transit owner or operator:

- prepare two separate plans: a System Safety Program Plan (Safety Plan) and a System Security and Emergency Preparedness Plan (Security and Emergency Plan);
- submit a Safety Plan and a Security and Emergency Plan to the Department 180 days before the plans go into effect, instead of current law which requires that the plans be submitted 90 days in advance; and
- notify the Department of reportable incidents within two hours of the incident, instead of current law which requires notification within 24 hours of a reportable incident.

The Department is required to establish by rule an annual fee for owners and operators of rail fixed guideway systems to defray the Department's costs associated with the plans and related investigations.

Affected rail transit owners and operators include: Sound Transit Link Light Rail, Seattle Center Monorail, Seattle South Lake Union Streetcar (after operation begins in 2007), Sound Transit Central Link Light Rail (after operation begins in 2009), and Seattle Waterfront Streetcar (when operation resumes).

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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