
Transportation Committee

ESSB 6099

Brief Description: Addressing the state route number 520 bridge replacement and HOV project.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senator Murray).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Requires the Department of Transportation, after consultation with the City of Seattle, to hire a mediator and planning staff to assist in developing a state route 520 (SR 520) expansion impact plan for addressing the impacts of the SR 520 bridge replacement project on Seattle neighborhoods, parks, institutions of higher education, and the City of Seattle.

Hearing Date: 3/26/07

Staff: Kathryn Leathers (786-7114).

Background:

The State Route 520 Evergreen Point Bridge (SR 520 bridge) is a one and a half mile, 42 year-old bridge that crosses Lake Washington in King County. The SR 520 bridge is in need of replacement due to its vulnerability to seismic activity and storm events. In addition to the deteriorating physical condition, the current bridge lacks shoulders for disabled and emergency vehicles, and experiences considerable amounts of congestion on a daily basis.

In 1997, the Trans-Lake Washington Study Committee was authorized by the Legislature to identify ways to improve transportation across and around Lake Washington. The Study Committee evaluated over 100 concepts for the corridor, and recommended beginning the development of a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) to further analyze those concepts, including a four-lane and an eight-lane replacement facility.

Under state and federal law, a determination that a transportation project could have potential adverse environmental impacts triggers the need to conduct an EIS under the National and State Environmental Policy Acts. The EIS review is required to include a review of all reasonable

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alternatives (not just the preferred alternative), and a plan for mitigating or avoiding impacts of those alternatives.

For purposes of the EIS process, the project was led by the Department of Transportation (Department), the Federal Highway Administration, and Sound Transit as co-lead agencies. Of the 100 concepts identified by the Study Committee, 19 alternatives were selected for further consideration. The first alternative EIS screening analysis for the SR 520 bridge replacement project was completed in 2000. The second screening, which focused on the potential for high capacity transit in the project corridor, was conducted in 2001. The second screening resulted in reducing the concepts to seven multi-modal alternatives, each with highway and high capacity transit components. A draft EIS that lays out the various design options for the two alternative options a four-lane facility, and a six-lane facility consisting of four general purpose lanes and two high capacity lanes was published in August 2006.

As the project has moved through the environmental review process, significant public outreach has been conducted, through public meetings, community briefings, and other public events, and through emails and letters. During the public comment period, the Department received over 1,700 unique submissions.

Summary of Bill:

The Department, after consultation with the City of Seattle, must hire a mediator as well as urban, transportation, and neighborhood planners, to assist with developing an impact plan for the State Route 520 bridge replacement project. In evaluating the impacts, the mediator must consider the concerns of neighborhoods and institutions of higher education directly impacted by the proposed designs. The plan must provide a comprehensive approach to mitigating the impacts of the project, and will address impacts on Seattle neighborhoods, parks, the City of Seattle, and institutions of higher education.

The Washington State Transportation Commission must oversee the development of the impact plan, and must approve the plan 60 days before either the Regional Transportation Investment District/Sound Transit measure is submitted to the voters in November 2007 or before the beginning of the 2008 Legislative Session.

The Department must hire the mediator within existing appropriations for the State Route 520 bridge replacement project. The mediator position is not a certified mediator position with legally binding decision authority.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.