
Transportation Committee

ESSB 6120

Brief Description: Addressing rail and freight infrastructure.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Marr, Swecker, Oemig, Haugen, Rockefeller, Kauffman, Berkey, Murray, Spanel, Eide, Kilmer, Poulsen, Delvin, Regala, Jacobsen, Fraser, Kohl-Welles and Rasmussen).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Requires state-funded rail projects to undergo a cost benefit analysis using priorities outlined in the bill.
- Requires the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB) to submit its list of recommenced freight projects to the Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC) and the Department of Transportation (DOT) by August 1 each year.
- Requires the DOT to submit a list of proposed rail projects or other state participation in rail infrastructure to the WSTC and the transportation committees of the Legislature by October 1 each year.
- Requires the WSTC to report to the transportation committees of the Legislature by December 15 each year on its concurrence or disagreement with the proposed rail projects.

Hearing Date: 3/26/07

Staff: Teresa Berntsen (786-7301).

Background:

Public funding for rail has historically been provided through a mix of state, federal, and local funding. State funding is generally provided by the Legislature through programs administered by the DOT and the FMSIB.

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.

In the 2005-2007 Transportation Budget, the Legislature appropriated funds for the WSTC to study the state's rail capacity and needs. The WSTC reported its findings to the Legislature in December 2006 in the "Statewide Rail Capacity and System Needs Study" (study). The study made several recommendations, including that the state should base its decision to participate in rail projects on a systematic assessment of costs and benefits across users and modes, and that a single entity should coordinate the state's participation in the rail transportation system.

Summary of Bill:

State funding for rail infrastructure improvements must be based on a cost/benefit analysis developed by the DOT in consultation with a stakeholder workgroup, using the following priorities: (1) economic, safety, or environmental advantages of freight movement by rail as compared to alternative modes; (2) self-sustaining economic development that creates family-wage jobs; (3) preservation of transportation corridors that would be otherwise lost; (4) increased access to efficient and cost-effective transportation for agricultural and industrial products; (5) better integration and cooperation within the regional, national, and international systems of freight distribution; and (6) mitigation of impacts of increased rail traffic on communities.

By August 1 each year, the FMSIB must submit its list of recommended projects to the DOT and the WSTC. To the greatest extent possible, the FMSIB's recommended projects must be consistent with the benefit/impact analysis developed by DOT and the stakeholder workgroup.

The DOT must develop and annually update a plan for state participation in rail infrastructure improvements, considering recommendations from the WSTC and the list of projects submitted by the FMSIB. The plan must be submitted to the WSTC and the transportation committees of the Legislature on October 1 each year. The DOT must report changed circumstances that affect the plan to the transportation committees of the Legislature by February 15 each year.

By December 15 each year, the WSTC must report to the transportation committees of the Legislature its concurrence or disagreement with the DOT's rail infrastructure plan, including any actions or projects recommended by the WSTC that are not in the DOT's plan.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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