

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5114

As Passed Senate, March 9, 2007

Title: An act relating to student transportation funding.

Brief Description: Changing student transportation funding.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Rockefeller, Parlette, Eide, Weinstein, Fairley, Keiser, Shin, Kohl-Welles, Murray, McAuliffe, Rasmussen, Kauffman, Kilmer, Franklin and Holmquist).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/25/07, 2/07/07 [DPS-WM, DNP]
Ways & Means: 2/14/07, 3/05/07 [DP2S, DNP].

Passed Senate: 3/09/07, 45-3.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5114 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Tom, Vice Chair; Brandland, Clements, Eide, Hewitt, Hobbs, Kauffman, Oemig, Rasmussen, Weinstein and Zarelli.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Holmquist, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Eric Bratton (786-7438)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5114 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair, Operating Budget; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Carrell, Fairley, Hatfield, Hewitt, Hobbs, Keiser, Kohl-Welles, Oemig, Parlette, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Schoesler and Tom.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Honeyford and Rockefeller.

Staff: Bryon Moore (786-7726)

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.

Background: The current student transportation funding formula provides allocations to districts based on the number of eligible students transported and the weighted radius distances between route stops and schools. Districts receive a state allocation for transportation to and from home and school beyond one radius mile. Additionally, the formula includes an allocation for kindergarten through fifth grade students living within one mile of their school. The state does not provide funding for field trips, extracurricular trips, extended school day take-home trips, or after school activity take-home trips.

The standard student mile is measured as the straight-line distance between bus route stops and school. However, the allocation rate can be adjusted to provide a differential for such factors as distance, passenger load, students with disabilities, or the need for special types of vehicles. The net result of these factors is a state funding formula for student transportation that incorporates a weighted student mile.

Summary of Second Substitute Bill: The Office of Financial Management (OFM), in consultation with Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC), will contract for the development of two options for a student transportation funding methodology that reflects actual costs and builds incentives for an efficient use of resources, and provides school districts with a formula for predictable levels of funding. In developing the two options, OFM and the contractor will consult with the OSPI, regional transportation coordinators, school business managers, school administrators, and classified staff. OFM will report to the education and fiscal committees of the Legislature with a detailed description of options and legislation that is required to implement options and any accompanying legislation to implement the funding methodology by December 1, 2008. The OFM report on the new funding formula is required to include an evaluation of the feasibility of having some or the entire pupil transportation program supported by the transportation budget, including utilizing local transit agencies. Starting with the 2007-08 school year, school districts are required to account for "to and from" spending costs separately from other pupil transportation spending.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except for Section 1, which takes effect September 1, 2009, and Section 2, which take effect September 1, 2007.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: The pupil transportation funding methodology is outdated. Using a radius mile instead of a road mile to measure to and from school distances does not take into account the dramatic effects of geography. Some students that live within one radius mile of school have to drive several road miles to get there. Under the current model, some school districts, due to the geography of their district, are big losers when it comes to pupil transportation funding. This bill helps to address the inequities in pupil transportation funding across school districts. The job of the OFM is to find ways to implement the JLARC recommendations as opposed to studying the funding methodologies further. Concern was expressed with the immediate implementation

of some sections of the bill. Providing funding for students with hazardous walking conditions is very important. Social hazards should be included in the definition of hazardous conditions. By building solid foundations for transportation funding, we can begin to address other funding issues.

Persons Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: Senator Rockefeller, prime sponsor; Ken Kanikeberg, Public School Employees of Washington; Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators; Julie Salvi, Office of Financial Management; Michael Green, Nine Mile Falls School District; Mitch Denning, Alliance of Educational Associations; Ron Lee, Washington Association Pupil Transportation and North Kitsap School District; Catherine Ahl, North Kitsap School Board; and Connie Fletcher, Issaquah School District.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: Pupil transportation funding is a major issue in nearly all school districts and the lack of state funding has caused the need to use local levy dollars to support the program. This is one area that the Legislature has enough information to take a significant step towards addressing, in advance of dealing with the larger basic education funding issues over the next several years. Between now and when the development of the new transportation funding formulas are developed, the Legislature should provide some temporary relief by enhancing pupil transportation in the budget.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Senator Rockefeller, prime sponsor; John Eschenbacher, Moses Lake School; Eugene Medina, North Kitsap School District.