

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6068

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 28, 2007

Title: An act relating to a feasibility study on commuter rail service between Everett and Leavenworth.

Brief Description: Requiring a feasibility study on providing commuter rail service between Everett and Leavenworth.

Sponsors: Senators Hobbs, Stevens, Haugen, Fairley, Berkey, McAuliffe, Shin and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/27/07, 2/28/07 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6068 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Marr, Vice Chair; Murray, Vice Chair; Swecker, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Clements, Delvin, Eide, Holmquist, Jacobsen, Kastama, Kauffman, Kilmer, Sheldon and Spanel.

Staff: Martha Hankins (786-7429)

Background: Commuter rail service holds the possibility of relieving congestion along heavily traveled urban corridors. In Snohomish County, there is local interest in commuter rail service between Everett and Index. Burlington Northern Santa Fe owns the rail line running east from Everett. This is a main rail line, experiencing high volumes of freight. Amtrak operates the *Empire Builder* service along the line from Everett east, all the way to Chicago. The *Empire Builder*, however, is a long range service and currently does not stop at towns between Everett and Wenatchee.

Increasing motor vehicle congestion along State Route 2 and possible tourist benefits led local interest policymakers to request a feasibility analysis of possible future rail service.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Proposed Substitute As Heard in Committee (Transportation): This bill authorizes a feasibility study of adding commuter rail and passenger service to the existing heavy gage rail line along State Route 2 between Everett and Index.

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 purpose of the feasibility study is to consider whether commuter rail service between Everett and Index could be a meaningful component of the region's future transportation system.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Transportation): A feasibility study of commuter rail as a possible future option for towns along Highway 2 from Everett to Index is authorized. A new section is added specifying that unless funding for the feasibility study is provided in the transportation budget, the act is null and void.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Snohomish County is growing by leaps and bounds. The many small towns along the route would benefit from access to rail service. Please amend SB 6068 to include Bellevue in this study; it's outside the Sound Transit district and outside the I-405 corridor, and RTID is only authorized to study roads, not rail. Rail provides a great alternative for commuters.

OTHER: This is a main BNSF line and currently operates at 130 percent of capacity. It's a valuable freight route and freight movement is important to the economy of Washington.

In support of the original bill, the citizens of Leavenworth would love to be able to ride the train to Seattle.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Hobbs, prime sponsor; Rick DeWitt, citizen.

OTHER: Bill Stauffacher, BNSF; Dawn Vyvyan, resident of Leavenworth.