

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6099

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 26, 2007

Title: An act relating to a state route number 520 expansion impact plan mediator.

Brief Description: Hiring a mediator to help the department of transportation develop a state route number 520 expansion impact plan.

Sponsors: Senator Murray.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/21/07, 2/26/07 [DPS, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6099 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Sheldon.

Staff: Hayley Gamble (786-7452)

Background: The State Route 520 Evergreen Point Bridge is a one and a half mile, 42 year old bridge crossing Lake Washington in King County. The 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. A draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that lays out the options for replacement structures was published in August 2006. During the public comment period the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) received over 1,700 unique submissions. Due to the volume of submissions that need to be addressed in a final EIS the schedule for completion of the final EIS has been delayed.

Certain impacts of highway construction are required to be mitigated for, while other elements are often negotiated with local jurisdictions. WSDOT has held multiple public open houses, community meetings, and other events to involve various stakeholders in bridge replacement discussions.

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.

Summary of Bill: WSDOT must hire a mediator and urban, transportation and neighborhood planners to assist with developing an impact plan for the State Route 520 bridge replacement project. The plan will address impacts on Seattle neighborhoods, parks, the City of Seattle and institutions of higher education. The mediator must work to ensure the plan provides a comprehensive approach to mitigation impacts of the project.

The impact plan must be approved by the Transportation Commission 60 days prior to the Regional Transportation Investment District/Sound Transit vote in November 2007, or before the beginning of the 2008 Legislative Session.

WSDOT must hire the mediator within existing appropriations for the State Route 520 bridge replacement project.

An emergency clause takes effect immediately. The emergency clause is needed in order to provide for timely implementation of an impact plan and to avoid delaying the State Route 520 EIS and bridge replacement project.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Transportation): Clarifying language is added to further define what impacts and concerns the mediator should consider. The mediator position is not to be a certified mediator with legally binding decision authority.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Lots of things can be done to make this project more palatable to the neighborhoods. This will hopefully result in a timely process that will allow mitigation decisions to be included in the design. WSDOT is often viewed as an advocate for a certain option and this bill will help with that. Seattle needs to develop a common vision for replacing the SR 520 bridge. We need ideas to bring everyone together on this project.

OTHER: Additional process will not make for a better project. This process may result in additional delays. A preferred alternative needs to be selected first, and then mitigation incorporated into that.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Murray, prime sponsor; Theodore Lane, Roanoke Park Community Council; Robert Rosencrantz, Montlake Community Club.

OTHER: Jonathan Dubman, Betterbridge.Org; Mark Stoner, Laurelhurst Friends for the Pacific Street Interchange.