

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6754

As of January 31, 2008

Title: An act relating to financing the state route number 520 bridge replacement project.

Brief Description: Financing the state route number 520 bridge replacement project.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen and Hatfield; by request of Governor Gregoire.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/30/08.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Hayley Gamble (786-7452)

Background: The State Route (SR) 520 bridge is a one and a half mile, 44 year old bridge that carries about 115,000 vehicles and 150,000 people per day, and is reaching the end of its useful life. Various efforts are underway to facilitate a timely replacement of the SR 520 bridge, including a supplemental draft environmental impact statement, a community mediation process, and planning related to a recent grant award from the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT). The SR 520 bridge financing plan required under legislation passed in 2007 was provided to the Legislature in early January 2008.

As a project in the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) proposal, the SR 520 bridge would have received state sales tax paid on the project. This sales tax rebate had been considered as revenue to the project. However, given voters recent rejection of the RTID funding package, a sales tax rebate is no longer available to the SR 520 bridge project. Additionally, the project will not receive \$1.1 billion that would have been provided through the RTID funding package.

In 2007 the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) was awarded a grant from the USDOT's Congestion Initiative, known as the Lake Washington Urban Partnership. The grant provided \$139 million, of which \$86 million was provided for active traffic management (such as traveler information and speed harmonization) and variable tolling on the SR 520 bridge. All but \$1.6 million of the grant is accessible once a variable tolling policy has been approved; legal authority exists for tolling to commence; and variable tolling is implemented on the SR 520 bridge project.

Summary of Bill: A SR 520 tolling implementation committee (Committee) is formed, consisting of three members, one each from the Puget Sound Regional Council, WSDOT, and the State Transportation Commission. The Committee must evaluate various issues relating to

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the SR 520 bridge replacement project, including traffic diversion, tolling technology, partnership opportunities, and also must survey citizens about the project. A report is due from the Committee to the Governor and Legislature by January 2009.

WSDOT may begin tolling on the existing SR 520 bridge and its replacement only after the Committee has submitted its report, and after subsequent approval of the Legislature to toll the SR 520 bridges. WSDOT must work with the Federal Highways Administration to determine what steps would be needed to toll the Interstate 90 bridge. The State Transportation Commission must set toll rates and the method of collection.

Payment of state and local sales and use tax applicable to site acquisition, construction, and equipment related to the SR 520 bridge replacement project may be deferred until five years after the project is open to traffic.

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: This project has been talked about for a long time and it is time to move forward so a new bridge can be built. A bill will help move this project forward. I-90 should also be considered for tolling. Variable tolling is a useful tool.

OTHER: Continuous HOV lanes on the bridge need to be part of the plan. Pontoons should be built as part of the proposed project that support high capacity transit. I-90 should not be tolled as it is an existing structure. Design decisions need to stay with the mediation process. Local governments should be consulted as part of the tolling process, and local roads should be considered as part of the diversion of traffic analysis.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Dow Constantine, King County Council; Jennifer Ziegler, Governor's Office; Bob Drewel, Puget Sound Regional Council; Dick Ford, Transportation Commission; Dave Dye, Department of Transportation.

OTHER: Jim Horn, Eastside Transportation Association; Janet Ray, American Automobile Association of Washington; Sandy Guinn, Bothell Deputy Mayor; Mark Lamb, Bothell Mayor; Betty Nokes, Bellevue Chamber of Commerce; Christine Hoffmann, Redmond Chamber of Commerce; Leslie Lloyd, Bellevue Downtown Association; Brad Boswell, Seattle Chamber of Commerce; Steve Mullin, Washington Roundtable; Chuck McWilliams, Kirkland Chamber of Commerce, Lake Washington Technical College; Genesee Adkins, Transportation Choices Coalition; Paul Locke; Jim Lauinger, Mayor of Kirkland; Phil Noble, Bellevue Councilmember; John Marchione, Mayor of Redmond.