

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6772

As of February 7, 2008

Title: An act relating to regional transportation governance.

Brief Description: Concerning regional transportation governance.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, Tom, Marr and Pridemore.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/05/08.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

Background: Many local transportation entities have formed, or are eligible to be formed, within the central Puget Sound region for the purposes of planning, funding, constructing, and/or operating transportation projects and services. The degree of coordination between the entities varies throughout the region. Some of the entities include:

- cities;
- counties;
- local transit districts;
- regional transit authorities (e.g., Sound Transit);
- regional transportation investment districts (RTID); and
- regional transportation planning organizations (e.g., Puget Sound Regional Council).

The final recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation submitted December 1, 2000, included Recommendation #6: "Provide regions with the ability to plan, select, fund, and implement (or contract for implementation of) projects identified to meet the region's transportation and land use goals." Additionally, in its final report issued on December 31, 2006, the Regional Transportation Commission included a primary recommendation stating that a single entity should be established in the central Puget Sound region "which has authority and responsibility for planning, prioritizing, and funding all modes of regional transportation..."

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

SUMMARY OF BILL (Proposed Substitute): Expanded RTA Authority: The legal authority of the existing regional transit authority is expanded, and the entity is redesignated as a "regional *transportation* authority" (RTA). In addition to its current authority to plan, finance, and operate a regional high-capacity transportation system, the agency must develop a

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"regional mobility investment plan" that includes a broad array of transportation projects, including highway and public transportation projects, to be submitted to regional voters. A broad list of additional local revenue options is available to support financing the plan. The plan submitted to regional voters must include revenue measures sufficient to finance the proposed projects.

The expanded authority granted to an RTA is made available to all counties within the state.

RTA Governing Body: The governing body of the central Puget Sound RTA is to be a majority-elected, nonpartisan body of twelve members, composed as follows: six elected by electoral districts, one elected at-large, three appointed by the county executives (or county commission chair, if applicable) and confirmed by their respective legislative authorities (each county gets one pick), the secretary of transportation (nonvoting), and the executive director of the applicable regional transportation planning organization (nonvoting). If this RTA annexes additional area, the governing body must be adjusted accordingly. An RTA outside of the central Puget Sound region must be governed pursuant to a local charter process adopted by local voters.

Coordinated Regional Planning: The RTA, the state Department of Transportation, and the regional transportation planning organization serving the RTA area, must all coordinate regional transportation planning efforts to ensure a comprehensive and integrated corridor-based multimodal regional transportation system. If a local or regional entity intends to submit a ballot measure to finance regionally significant transportation projects within the RTA area, the RTA must first approve sending the ballot measure to voters. A local entity may choose, subject to RTA approval, to incorporate local ballot measures funding strictly localized projects into the RTA's regional mobility investment plan. The RTA must establish an incentives-based process of negotiating cooperative relationships with local jurisdictions within the RTA area. The RTA must establish regional transit routes and fares, and coordinate with local transit agencies to establish a program for interconnecting fares, schedules, and transfers within the region.

RTID Law: The RTID law is repealed in its entirety.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately, except for sections 528 and 530 which take effect July 1, 2008.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: After the failure of Proposition 1 in the central Puget Sound region last fall, which was a huge setback, some of the members of the Regional Transportation Commission continued to work on regional transportation governance. They decided that the region needs an elected board in order to move ahead. The region needs the authority to create one entity, with a single point of accountability, that plans, prioritizes, and finances multimodal transportation packages in the region. The authority should eventually include the federal planning functions currently exercised by metropolitan planning organizations. It is a great idea to make this authority available to other regions of the state.

Polling in the central Puget Sound region indicates that voters have much more trust in directly elected transportation officials. The region is desperate for change. An improved transportation system would greatly improve the business climate in the region. This bill provides another "tool" for regions to attempt to solve their transportation problems. The bill is a key issue for the AAA. There are too many existing entities in the region with transportation authority, and too little coordination and accountability.

OTHER: It is a good idea to provide this authority to other regions of the state. However, there should also be a charter process in the central Puget Sound region to set up a form of regional transportation governance. The electoral districts provided in the bill are too large, and would result in very costly campaigns. Sound Transit wants to be a part of the discussion, and is looking at next steps after the failure of Proposition 1. The bill shouldn't jeopardize current Sound Transit plans and services. The new authority should include land use and permitting authority. The board composition in the bill would reduce existing representation levels that exist on the current Sound Transit board. Sound Transit is concerned about any project delays that might occur if this bill were enacted. The bill may jeopardize pending federal grants. The bill should provide for more supermajority votes for certain important decisions. Subarea equity provisions should be added to the bill. The bill does not provide for enough local input. The environmental community is not convinced that regional transportation governance is a problem, and they feel there is no sense of urgency or crisis around this issue at this time. They see many other pressing problems instead. Changing the existing regional transportation governance structure would be too risky at this time. The bill could set back Sound Transit's progress. The environmental community supports providing additional funding tools, but there are too many questions around this proposal.

Persons Testifying: PRO: John Stanton, Regional Transportation Commission; Steve Mullin, WA Roundtable; Rick Wickman, Identity Clark County; Duke Schaub, AGC-Washington; Janet Ray, AAA Washington.

OTHER: Dick Ford, WA Transportation Commission; Joni Earl, Sound Transit; Claudia Thomas, Sound Transit; Genesee Adkins, Transportation Choices Coalition; Kevin Weed, Perteet Inc.