
Transportation Committee

HB 1209

Brief Description: Providing funding for passenger-only ferry construction.

Sponsors: Representatives Ericksen, Roach, Bailey and Rolfes.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows the Department of Transportation to purchase five passenger-only ferries.
- Transfers \$25 million from the Multimodal Transportation Account to the Passenger Ferry Account, for the purposes of purchasing five passenger-only ferries.
- Requires the qualifying bidder for the ferries to be able to design ferries that produce sufficiently low wake and provide high-speed transit through Rich Passage.

Hearing Date: 2/2/09

Staff: Teresa Berntsen (786-7301)

Background:

The Department of Transportation, Ferries Division (Ferries) provides auto-passenger ferry service on routes throughout Puget Sound. In the past, Ferries has also provided passenger-only ferry service. The only remaining passenger-only route operated by Ferries is from Seattle to Vashon, which is paid for by King County.

Ferries operated passenger-only ferry service between Seattle and Bremerton, which ended in 2003. Considerations in ending this service included having to slow the passenger-only ferry due to a series of lawsuits alleging damage caused by the ferries and their wakes as they proceeded through the tidal strait known as Rich Passage.

The state maintains a ferry grant program funded by the Passenger Ferry Account. County ferry districts and public transportation benefit areas may apply for operating or capital grants to operate passenger-only ferry service. Currently the funding source for this account is proceeds from the sale of Ferries' passenger-only vessels, as as required by chapter 121, Laws of 2008 (the

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2008 Transportation Budget). Ferries closed the sale of the passenger-only ferries *Chinook* and *Snohomish* on January 16, 2009.

Summary of Bill:

The Department of Transportation (Department) is authorized to purchase five passenger-only ferries using the design-build process authorized by chapter 47.60 RCW. In order to qualify for the bid for the five ferries, the bidder must be able to design ferries that produce sufficiently low wake and provide high-speed transit through Rich Passage.

\$25 million is transferred from the Multimodal Transportation Account to the Passenger Ferry Account, for the purposes of purchasing the five passenger-only ferries. \$25 million, or as much as may be necessary, is appropriated for the 2009-11 biennium from the Passenger Ferry Account to the Department for the purposes of purchasing the five passenger-only ferry vessels.

Appropriation: The sum of \$25 million.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 27, 2008.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.