

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2911

As Reported by House Committee On: Transportation

Title: An act relating to creating a complete streets grant program.

Brief Description: Creating a complete streets grant program.

Sponsors: Representatives Moeller, Takko, Ormsby, Morris, Nelson, Upthegrove, Liias, Williams, Simpson, Cody, Orwall, White, Morrell and Kenney.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/28/10, 2/3/10 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to establish a Complete Streets Grant Program.
- Creates the Complete Streets Grant Program Account in the State Treasury.
- Requires the WSDOT to consult with local jurisdictions prior to any design work when constructing or making major repairs to city streets that are part of a state highway.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 16 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Liias, Vice Chair; Dickerson, Driscoll, Eddy, Finn, Flannigan, Moeller, Morris, Rolfes, Sells, Springer, Takko, Upthegrove, Williams and Wood.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Rodne, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Campbell, Ericksen, Herrera, Johnson, Klippert, Kristiansen, Nealey and Shea.

Staff: Debbie Driver (786-7143).

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.

Background:

Executive Order E. 1028, adopted by the Secretary of Transportation on November 24, 2003, directs the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) employees to implement a context sensitive solutions approach for all WSDOT projects. A context sensitive solutions approach means that the WSDOT employees working on projects and facilities should engage affected communities, assure the transportation objectives are clearly described and discussed with the local communities, recognize and address community and citizen concerns, and ensure the project is a safe facility for both the user and community. The WSDOT's Office of Highways and Local Programs and the State Design Engineer are responsible for carrying out this Executive Order.

One approach to context sensitive design is provided by the Institute of Transportation Engineers' (ITE) publication titled "Context Sensitive Solutions in Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities." The publication provides context sensitive design principles and guidelines that can be implemented when designing major urban thoroughfares. This approach features community involvement throughout the planning process and addresses all modes of travel within the thoroughfare.

"Complete streets" refers to the practice of designing and operating streets so that safe access is provided to all users including motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users.

With regards to city streets that are part of a state highway system, currently local communities have jurisdiction and responsibility for curb maintenance and improvements while the WSDOT is responsible for maintaining and preserving the street itself. The WSDOT can relinquish control of street maintenance to the local jurisdiction.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Complete Streets Grant Program.

The Complete Streets Grant Program (grant program) is established in the WSDOT's Highways and Local Programs Division. The purpose of the grant program is to encourage local governments to adopt urban arterial retrofit street ordinances to provide safe access to all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transportation users. Eligible projects:

- must be from a local government defined as an incorporated city or town with a population of at least 20,000. The local government must have adopted a jurisdiction-wide complete streets ordinance that plans for the needs of all users and is consistent with sound engineering principles; and
- must be a street retrofit project that includes the addition of, or significant repair to, facilities that provide street access with all users in mind including pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transportation users.

Sound engineering principles are defined as the 2006 urban design principles and guidelines found in the publication developed by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) titled

"Context Sensitive Solutions in Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities."

The Complete Streets Grant Program Account (Account) is created in the State Treasury. The WSDOT may solicit and receive gifts, grants, or endowments from private and other sources and deposit those funds in the Account. Moneys in the Account may only be spent after appropriation. The WSDOT must report annually to the transportation committees of the Legislature on the status of any grant projects funded by the grant program.

State Highways that Include City Streets.

For WSDOT new construction or major street repair projects which include city streets that are part of state highways and are initially planned or scoped after July 1, 2010, the WSDOT must consult with the local jurisdiction in the design and planning phase. This consultation must include public outreach, meetings with stakeholders, and identification of community goals and priorities. The WSDOT must consider the needs of all users by applying context sensitive design solutions consistent with the most recent ITE Context Sensitive Solutions report. These consultation requirements are contingent upon a local funding contribution to the project, as determined by the WSDOT.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

For the purposes of complete street grant eligible projects, the definition of an eligible project was expanded to include locations that are served by both a local government and a city or incorporated town that is less than 20,000 in population that has adopted a jurisdiction-wide streets ordinance.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This legislation will create an incentive-based program capable of accepting future federal funding and possible state funding for complete streets efforts. The complete streets planning concept is a national movement that is gaining momentum in local and state communities. Passage of the bill would set up Washington as a national leader in complete streets efforts.

Aside from the national leadership and future funding opportunities, implementing the Complete Streets Grant Program (grant program) would create an incentive-based program that would award local cities and jurisdictions that currently, or plan to, implement complete street planning efforts. Complete streets engage communities and address a variety of public health and traffic concerns. Given the obesity epidemic, and the high costs driven by obesity,

complete streets provide connectivity and encourage physical activity within a community. Studies show that people are significantly more active in communities where biking and walking is safe, easy, convenient, and enjoyable. People want to walk and bike more and drive less. Developing complete streets increases the opportunities for people to safely bike and walk in their communities while providing better motor vehicle traffic flow. Complete streets also result in connecting children and parents to safe routes to school which can reduce the cost of busing and allow more money for schools.

Currently traffic deaths in Washington impacting bicyclists and pedestrians are not being addressed until after an incident. Bicyclist and pedestrian activity is not addressed as completely as it should be addressed in street planning. This bill supports planning that addresses these concerns from the beginning of the planning phase and throughout the project.

Complete streets are about intentionally designing our built environment to enable people to be more active. Many cities are already built out yet this grant program will allow opportunities for making those streets much more efficient and improve the infrastructure for all users. Many urban streets are not complete and many people are not able to walk along the streets given there are no sidewalks.

(In support with amendment) One way to improve the bill would be to include cities and towns with a population of less than 20,000 that adjoin a local government (with a population of 20,000 or more) as eligible applicants.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Moeller, prime sponsor; Andrew Austin, Transportation Choices Coalition; Barbara Culp, Bicycle Alliance of Washington; Lisa Quinn, Feet First; Amy Shuman, Public Health Seattle and King County; Victor Coleman, Statewide Childhood Obesity Coalition; Ryan Mello, City of Tacoma; and Todd Boulanger, Bike Me.

(In support with amendment) Ashley Probart, Association of Washington Cities.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (In support) Tim Gould, Sierra Club.