

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 5795

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### As Passed House:

April 13, 2009

**Title:** An act relating to the Tacoma Narrows toll bridge account.

**Brief Description:** Modifying the use of funds from the Tacoma Narrows toll bridge account.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Kilmer and Franklin).

### Brief History:

#### Committee Activity:

Transportation: 3/19/09, 3/23/09 [DP].

#### Floor Activity

Passed House: 4/13/09, 98-0.

### Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Restricts use of the Tacoma Narrows Toll Bridge Account so that it may be used only for costs that contribute directly to the financing, operation, maintenance, management, and necessary repairs of the tolled facility.
- Delegates responsibility for determining whether charges are authorized to the Washington State Transportation Commission (Transportation Commission).
- Requires that the Washington State Department of Transportation provide quarterly expenditure reports to the Transportation Commission and the public.
- Changes the Tacoma Narrows Bridge sales and use tax deferral to a tax exemption.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 27 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Lias, Vice Chair; Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Rodne, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Campbell, Cox, Driscoll, Eddy, Ericksen, Finn, Flannigan, Herrera, Johnson, Klippert, Kristiansen, Moeller, Rolfes, Sells, Shea, Simpson, Springer, Takko, Upthegrove, Wallace, Williams and Wood.

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*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.*

**Staff:** Christie Parker (786-7322)

**Background:**

The Tacoma Narrows Toll Bridge Account (Account) holds Tacoma Narrows bridge revenues, including bond proceeds, toll revenues, interest, proceeds from surplus property sales, and liquidated damages collected as a result of bridge construction contracts. Funds from this Account may be used to pay any costs for the financing, operation, maintenance, management, and necessary repairs of the facility. Funds may also be used to pay debt service costs at the direction of the State Treasurer.

In 2002 legislation allowed sales and use taxes to be deferred for State Route 16 improvements that were constructed as part of a public-private transportation initiative. Under this law, tax payments must begin five years after the project is operationally complete.

**Summary of Bill:**

The Account may be used only for costs that contribute directly to the financing, operation, maintenance, management, and repairs of the tolled bridge. Funds in this Account may not be used to pay for costs that do not directly contribute to these functions. The Washington State Transportation Commission (Transportation Commission) determines whether charges are authorized. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) shall use existing resources to create and provide quarterly detailed expenditure reports. These reports are to be forwarded to the Transportation Commission. The expenditure reports will also be posted on the WSDOT website so that they will be accessible to the public. In addition, deferred sales and use taxes for construction of State Route 16 improvements do not need to be repaid.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** 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 bill protects taxpayers and toll payers. Toll payers are WSDOT's customers, and it is important to be considerate to them and let them know what they're paying for. Decreasing expenses is a good idea. The bridge cannot talk on a cell phone or eat meals, yet some of these expenses are being charged to the Tacoma Narrows Account. We don't want tolls to be increased to pay for these activities. Although an Executive Order on this has been signed, it is not law. If the bill is approved, the Transportation Commission will work with WSDOT to address these issues.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Senator Kilmer, prime sponsor; Adam Brockus; and Dick Ford, Washington State Transportation Commission.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.