

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2941

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Transportation, March 1, 2010

Title: An act relating to the use of express toll lanes in the Interstate 405 corridor.

Brief Description: Authorizing the use of express toll lanes in the Interstate 405 corridor.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Clibborn, O'Brien, Maxwell, Lias, Eddy, Springer, Hunter and Goodman).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/26/10, 56-40.

Committee Activity: Transportation: 3/01/10 [DPA, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Marr, Vice Chair; Berkey, Eide, Hatfield, Jacobsen, Kastama, Kauffman, Kilmer, Ranker and Sheldon.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Swecker, Ranking Minority Member; Becker, Delvin and King.

Staff: Hayley Gamble (786-7452)

Background: High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes are lanes reserved part-time or full-time for vehicles carrying more than one occupant. HOV lanes are intended to allow users to avoid congestion and provide reliable travel times. The Washington State Department of Transportation (DOT) has authority to designate HOV lanes on state highways, and there are currently over 200 miles of HOV lanes in operation in the central Puget Sound area. During certain periods, HOV lanes are operating below capacity while adjacent general purpose lanes are congested.

High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes are lanes that are open to carpools, vanpools, transit vehicles, and toll-paying vehicles. These lanes are intended to maintain a higher level of service for multi-occupant vehicles, while permitting other vehicles to use surplus capacity in the lane by paying a toll. DOT is currently operating a HOT lane pilot project along the nine miles of HOV lanes on State Route 167 (SR 167) within King County. Tolls on the project are established by the state tolling authority, the Washington State Transportation

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Commission (Transportation Commission), and vary in amount by time of day and the level of traffic congestion. During peak hours, the tolls must be adjusted to maintain HOT lane performance of at least 45 miles per hour (mph) for at least 90 percent of the time.

In 2009 DOT was directed in Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5352 to conduct a traffic revenue study for Interstate 405 (I-405) in King and Snohomish counties that included funding for improvements and HOT lanes. DOT was also directed to develop a plan to operate up to two HOT lanes in each direction on I-405.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Amendments): Tolling in express toll lanes on I-405, between Interstate 5 and the city of Bellevue, is authorized. The state tolling authority, the Transportation Commission, is directed to set the schedule of toll rates for these express toll lanes, which can vary by time of day, level of congestion, vehicle occupancy, and other criteria determined by the tolling authority.

DOT is required to adjust the toll rate in the express lanes to insure that vehicles with one occupant are allowed to enter the express toll lanes only to the extent that average speeds in the lanes remain above 45 mph 90 percent of the time during peak hours.

DOT is required to conduct a traffic and revenue analysis of a 40-mile continuous express toll lane system that includes SR 167 and I-405. DOT is directed to use the information from this analysis to develop a financing plan to fund improvements in the corridor, and is required to present both the traffic and revenue analysis and the finance plan to the Governor and the Legislature by January 2011.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Amendments): Removes the requirement that vehicles with two occupants will need to pay a toll to use the Interstate 405 express toll lanes.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

[OFM requested ten-year cost projection pursuant to I-960.]

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Substitute House Bill: PRO: This bill is the result of the recent I-405 study. People avoid I-405 because of the congestion, there are holes in funding for the corridor due to the failure of the RTID funding proposal. This project will provide an example project for bonding a HOT lane revenue stream to help fund more projects in the corridor. Express toll lanes help manage roads as a resource and move more people.

CON: We support building I-405 as it is listed in the Corridor Master Plan, and not moving forward with this bill this session. The 2009 corridor study did not suggest this bill was necessary and the study should continue to be reviewed. The full I-405 Master Plan should

be implemented; HOT lanes will not raise much revenue. This is another experimental approach, and other experimental ideas on the corridor have failed.

OTHER: May be a good idea to take some time reviewing this concept to make sure these issues are fully vetted.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Clibborn, prime sponsor; Joan McBride, Mayor of Kirkland; Doug Levy, city of Renton & Renton Chamber of Commerce; Ed Irwin, Real Estate Agent, Kirkland; Duke Schaub, Association of General Contractors of Washington; Craig Stone, WSDOT; April Putney, Futerwise.

CON: Tim Hunt, Bellevue Chamber of Commerce; Jim Horn, Former State Senator; Bill Eager, TDA, Inc.; Bruce Nurse, Kemper Development Co.; Dick Paylor, ETA; Arthur West, citizen.

OTHER: Mike Ennis, Washington Policy Center; Dave Overstreet, AAA Washington.