
HOUSE BILL 1512

State of Washington 61st Legislature 2009 Regular Session

By Representatives Halper, Roach, and Klippert

Read first time 01/22/09. Referred to Committee on Transportation.

1 AN ACT Relating to funding rail freight service through grants; and
2 amending RCW 47.76.250.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 **Sec. 1.** RCW 47.76.250 and 1996 c 73 s 2 are each amended to read
5 as follows:

6 (1) The essential rail assistance account is created in the state
7 treasury. Moneys in the account may be appropriated only for the
8 purposes specified in this section.

9 (2) Moneys appropriated from the account to the department of
10 transportation may be used by the department or distributed by the
11 department to cities, county rail districts, counties, economic
12 development councils, and port districts for the purpose of:

13 (a) Acquiring, rebuilding, rehabilitating, or improving rail lines;

14 (b) Purchasing or rehabilitating railroad equipment necessary to
15 maintain essential rail service;

16 (c) Constructing railroad improvements to mitigate port access or
17 mainline congestion;

18 (d) Construction of loading facilities to increase business on
19 light density lines or to mitigate the impacts of abandonment;

1 (e) Preservation, including operation, of light density lines, as
2 identified by the Washington state department of transportation, in
3 compliance with this chapter; or

4 (f) Preserving rail corridors for future rail purposes by purchase
5 of rights-of-way. The department shall first pursue transportation
6 enhancement program funds, available under the federal surface
7 transportation program, to the greatest extent practicable to preserve
8 rail corridors. Purchase of rights-of-way may include track, bridges,
9 and associated elements, and must meet the following criteria:

10 (i) The right-of-way has been identified and evaluated in the state
11 rail plan prepared under this chapter;

12 (ii) The right-of-way may be or has been abandoned; and

13 (iii) The right-of-way has potential for future rail service.

14 (3) The department or the participating local jurisdiction is
15 responsible for maintaining any right-of-way acquired under this
16 chapter, including provisions for drainage management, fire and weed
17 control, and liability associated with ownership.

18 (4) Nothing in this section impairs the reversionary rights of
19 abutting landowners, if any, without just compensation.

20 (5) The department, cities, county rail districts, counties, and
21 port districts may grant franchises to private railroads for the right
22 to operate on lines acquired under this chapter.

23 (6) The department, cities, county rail districts, counties, and
24 port districts may grant trackage rights over rail lines acquired under
25 this chapter.

26 (7) If rail lines or rail rights-of-way are used by county rail
27 districts, port districts, state agencies, or other public agencies for
28 the purposes of rail operations and are later abandoned, the rail lines
29 or rail rights-of-way cannot be used for any other purposes without the
30 consent of the underlying fee title holder or reversionary rights
31 holder, or until compensation has been made to the underlying fee title
32 holder or reversionary rights holder.

33 (8) The department of transportation shall develop criteria for
34 prioritizing freight rail projects that meet the minimum eligibility
35 requirements for state assistance under RCW 47.76.240. The department
36 shall develop criteria in consultation with the Washington state
37 freight rail policy advisory committee. Project criteria should
38 consider the level of local financial commitment to the project as well

1 as cost/benefit ratio. Counties, local communities, railroads,
2 shippers, and others who benefit from the project should participate
3 financially to the greatest extent practicable.

4 (9) Moneys received by the department from franchise fees, trackage
5 rights fees, and loan payments shall be redeposited in the essential
6 rail assistance account. Repayment of loans made under this section
7 shall occur within a period not longer than fifteen years, as set by
8 the department. The repayment schedule and rate of interest, if any,
9 shall be determined before the distribution of the moneys.

10 (10) The state shall maintain a contingent interest in any
11 equipment, property, rail line, or facility that has outstanding grants
12 or loans. The owner may not use the line as collateral, remove track,
13 bridges, or associated elements for salvage, or use it in any other
14 manner subordinating the state's interest without permission from the
15 department.

16 (11) Moneys distributed under this chapter should be provided as
17 ~~((loans wherever practicable. Except as provided by section 3, chapter~~
18 ~~73, Laws of 1996, for improvements on or to privately owned railroads,~~
19 ~~railroad property, or other private property, moneys distributed shall~~
20 ~~be provided solely as loans))~~ grants that include contractual
21 consideration given by the grantee.

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