

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2601

As Reported by House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to improving public transit through the creation of transit service overlay zones.

Brief Description: Improving public transit through the creation of transit service overlay zones.

Sponsors: Representatives Eddy, Liias, Ryu, Ladenburg and Moscoso.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/23/12, 2/1/12, 2/6/12 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Allows regional transportation planning organizations (RTPO) to establish criteria for transit service overlay zones (zone), which must include frequent bus service, minimum employment and housing unit densities, connection of employment and population centers, and transit assistive design criteria.
- Allows a zone that meets the local RTPO criteria and is established through an interlocal agreement to be included in a city's comprehensive plan.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Billig, Vice Chair; Liias, Vice Chair; Asay, Eddy, Finn, Fitzgibbon, Hansen, Jinkins, Kristiansen, Ladenburg, Moeller, Morris, Moscoso, Reykdal, Ryu, Takko, Upthegrove and Zeiger.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Armstrong, Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Angel, Johnson, Klippert, McCune, Overstreet, Rivers, Rodne and Shea.

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

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:

Transit Service Overlay Zone Advisory Group.

In 2011 the Legislature directed the Puget Sound Regional Council (Council) to further the implementation of multimodal concurrency practice through the development of a transit service overlay zone (zone) to be implemented at the local level. This effort was intended to increase the linkage of land use and transportation investment decisions, and improve the efficiency of transit service by encouraging transit-supportive development. In carrying out this effort, the Council involved representatives from cities and counties, developers, transit agencies, and other interested stakeholders. A report from this advisory group is due to the Legislature by January 31, 2012.

The preliminary recommendation of the advisory group was to encourage the creation of zones by interested cities, counties, and transit agencies. To be eligible for the zone program, a designated corridor must meet an agreed upon set of criteria, including a minimum population density within walking distance to the corridor and frequent all-day, two direction bus service. A zone corridor must also connect to high density employment/population centers, as well as to other destinations along the corridor to allow for other non-work trips to occur. Development within the corridor would be encouraged through the provision of select incentives.

Growth Management Act.

Enacted in 1990 and 1991, the Growth Management Act (GMA) establishes a comprehensive land use planning framework for county and city governments in Washington. Counties and cities meeting specific population and growth criteria are required to conform to the major requirements of the GMA. Counties not meeting these criteria may choose to plan under the GMA. Currently, 29 of 39 counties, and the cities within those 29 counties, are required to or have chosen to conform with the major requirements of the GMA (GMA jurisdictions). The GMA jurisdictions must adopt comprehensive land use plans, which are generalized coordinated land use policy statements of the governing body. Comprehensive plans are required to include provisions for nine specific planning elements and may include additional elements as determined by the GMA jurisdiction.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

A regional transportation planning organization (RTPO) may establish eligibility criteria for the creation of transit service overlay zones (zone) by cities, counties, and transit agencies located within the RTPO's boundaries. The eligibility criteria must include:

- frequent all-day, two direction bus service or inclusion in the transit agency's long-range plan for such service;
- a minimum existing or planned employment and housing unit density within walking distance of the corridor;
- connection of high density employment and population centers; and
- design criteria that assist with the providing of transit service.

Cities, counties, and transit agencies may establish zones through an interlocal agreement, pursuant to chapter 39.34 RCW, that meets the eligibility criteria established by the local RTPO. The determination of whether the zone meets these eligibility criteria is made by the local RTPO.

A zone that meets the local RTPO's eligibility criteria and is established through an interlocal agreement may be included in a city's comprehensive plan.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The State Environmental Policy Act exemption for projects of less than 150 residential units and 100,000 commercial square feet within the transit service overlay zone (zone) is removed.

The zone criteria for density is modified so that it sets a minimum regarding housing unit density rather than population density.

An additional criteria for zones is added which requires design criteria that assist with the providing of transit service.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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) The recommendations in this bill were created by a group with experience in planning and transit, but the recommendations can be revised. The bill's emphasis on corridors rather than a single location is important, and could move the private sector to act.

There could be unforeseen consequences from the exemption to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).

(In support with concerns) It is important to link transit, development, and planning. Some cities are already linking these activities, but the passage of this bill might increase the number of cities that are doing so.

The creation of transit service overlay zones (zones) could be tied to other exemptions from the SEPA, and these zones should be allowed for high capacity transit as well.

(Opposed) The state needs to subsidize bicycling in the same fashion it subsidizes cars and buses because bicycles are more efficient.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Eddy, prime sponsor; and Ron Posthuma, King County.

(In support with concerns) April Putney, Futurewise.

(Opposed) Yoshe Revelle.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.