
Transportation Committee

SSB 5337

Brief Description: Authorizing the provision of financial assistance to privately owned airports available for general use of the public.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Stevens, Pflug, Honeyford, Swecker and Roach).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Allows privately owned airports that are available for general use of the public to be eligible for grants or loans from Washington State Department of Transportation Aviation.

Hearing Date: 3/10/11

Staff: Jerry Long (786-7306).

Background:

The Washington State Department of Transportation, Aviation Division (WSDOT-Aviation), uses funds from the state's Aeronautics Account (Account) to operate 17 state-owned airports and make grants or loans to municipalities, which include counties, cities, towns, authorities, districts, or other political subdivisions or public corporations of the state and any federally recognized Indian tribes. Presently there are no tribal-owned airports. Funds can be used for the acquisition, construction, improvement, maintenance, or operation of an airport that is available for general use by the public. Presently there are 138 total public use airports; 17 are state-owned and/or operated, 90 are owned by municipalities, and 31 are privately owned.

State-levied taxes and fees include:

- 10 percent of the aircraft excise tax, between \$20 and \$125 annually depending on type of aircraft. (\$55,000 per biennium);
- aircraft fuel tax, 11 cents per gallon for aircraft, but does not apply to the operation of aircraft when such use is by any air carrier or supplemental air carrier operating under a

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certificate of public convenience and necessity, the operation of aircraft for testing or experimental purposes or training of crews, or the operation of aircraft in the operations of a local service commuter. (\$5.2 million per biennium);

- aircraft registration fees, \$15 annually. (\$184,000 per biennium); and,
- aircraft dealers license fee, \$75 annually. (\$8,000 per biennium).

Sources of revenue in the Account also include federal airport development grants, planning grants, and other federal sources (\$2.2 million per biennium).

The maximum amount that the WSDOT-Aviation awards in a single grant is \$250,000, with a minimum of 5 percent local match. Local matches can be in cash or in-kind volunteer labor and materials; however, the airport sponsor will be required under state law to maintain certain records documenting the number of volunteer hours provided, labor value based on prevailing wage rates, and cost or value of donated materials, etc. Normally the grants are awarded in June of each year.

Summary of Bill:

The bill allows privately owned airports that are available for general use by the public to be eligible for grants or loans from the WSDOT-Aviation. Additionally, the WSDOT is directed to establish, through rule, criteria for grants and loans administered by the WSDOT-Aviation.

The WSDOT-Aviation is authorized to act as an agent for privately owned airports as they are presently for municipalities or tribes. Privately owned airports would have to revert any assistance granted if the airport failed to collect aircraft fuel as required by state law just like municipalities and tribes.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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