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## Transportation Committee

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### SSB 5700

**Brief Description:** Concerning certain toll facilities.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Haugen and King).

#### Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Approves the actions taken by the Washington State Transportation Commission (Transportation Commission) to adopt the toll rates for the State Route 520 (SR 520) corridor, the schedule of photo toll charges applicable to the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, and the assessment of administrative fees for toll collection processes.
- Approves the delegation to the Transportation Committee of the authority to set and adjust toll rates on the SR 520 corridor in accordance with previously enacted statutory criteria, but limits the adjustments to the toll rates to amounts not greater than those necessary for debt payments or operating costs.
- Reauthorizes the issuance of toll revenue bonds for the reconstruction of the SR 520 corridor.

**Hearing Date:** 2/23/11

**Staff:** David Munnecke (786-7315).

#### **Background:**

The State Route 520 (SR 520) Evergreen Point Bridge is a 1.5 mile, 47-year-old bridge crossing Lake Washington in King County. The bridge is scheduled for replacement due to its vulnerability to seismic activity and storm events. In addition to the deteriorating physical condition, the bridge lacks shoulders for disabled and emergency vehicles and experiences considerable congestion.

The Legislature has authorized tolling on the SR 520 corridor, authorized bonds to finance construction of corridor projects, and committed to continue imposing tolls on the corridor in

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amounts sufficient to pay the principal and interest on the bonds. The Washington State Department of Transportation intends to start imposing tolls on the corridor in the Spring of 2011 using a new electronic toll collection system that includes photo tolling, which was authorized during the 2010 regular legislative session.

On January 5, 2011, the Transportation Commission adopted a schedule of toll rates applicable to the SR 520 corridor, and on January 25, 2011, adopted a schedule of photo toll rates applicable to the Tacoma Narrows Bridge. Included in the Transportation Commission's January 5 action was the adoption of administrative fees for toll collection processes.

On November 2, 2010, Washington voters approved Initiative Measure No. 1053 (I-1053), which took effect December 2, 2010. Among other requirements, I-1053 provides that "[a] fee may only be imposed or increased in any fiscal year if approved with majority legislative approval in both the House of Representatives and the Senate...." Tolls are generally considered to be fees.

**Summary of Bill:**

Consistent with the fee provisions of I-1053 and previously enacted statutory toll-related criteria, the Legislature approves the action taken by the Transportation Commission in January to: (1) adopt the schedule of toll rates applicable to the SR 520 corridor; (2) adopt the schedule of photo toll charges applicable to the Tacoma Narrows Bridge; and (3) adopt the assessment of administrative fees for toll collection processes. The Legislature also approves the delegation to the Transportation Commission of the authority to set and adjust toll rates on the SR 520 corridor in accordance with previously enacted statutory criteria. The Transportation Commission may adjust the SR 520 toll rates only in amounts not greater than those sufficient to meet the operating costs of the facility and make debt service payments and other associated financing costs. The Transportation Commission must send a report to the Legislature regarding any increase or decrease to the SR 520 toll rates, along with a detailed justification of the action.

Corrective language is enacted to reauthorize the issuance of toll revenue bonds applicable to the SR 520 corridor. The definition of toll revenue for bonding purposes applicable to the SR 520 corridor is broadened to include funds received for the benefit of transportation facilities in the state.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** This bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.