

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1897

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Transportation, March 23, 2011

Title: An act relating to establishing a rural mobility grant program.

Brief Description: Establishing a rural mobility grant program.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Billig, Johnson, Clibborn, Armstrong, Liias, Takko, Walsh, Blake, Dunshee, Rolfes, Van De Wege, Lytton, Fitzgibbon and Ormsby).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/05/11, 97-1.

Committee Activity: Transportation: 3/21/11, 3/23/11 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; White, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Minority Member; Delvin, Eide, Hobbs, Nelson, Ranker, Shin and Swecker.

Staff: Amanda Cecil (786-7429)

Background: The Rural Mobility Grant Program (Program) was established by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) in 1993. The Program was significantly expanded in 2003 as part of the nickel transportation funding package. The 2009-11 Transportation Budget contains a total of \$17 million divided equally between competitive grants, for providers of rural mobility service in areas not served or underserved by transit agencies, and formula grants, for transit systems serving small cities and rural areas, which must be distributed in a manner similar to past disparity equalization programs.

According to WSDOT, the purpose of the competitive portion of the Program is to establish, preserve, and improve rural public transportation. Funding in the Program is prioritized for services in rural counties, which are defined as counties without an urbanized area, as defined by the 2000 census. The following types of organizations are eligible for competitive grant funding:

- rural public transit agencies;
- nonprofit organizations;
- private for-profit transportation service providers;

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- tribal governments; and
- other general or local governments.

Summary of Bill: The Rural Mobility Grant Program Account and quarterly transfers of \$2.5 million from the Multimodal Transportation Account are established.

The Program is established in statute and money in the account is to be evenly divided between competitive and noncompetitive grants for rural transit mobility.

During the 2011-13 biennium, a pilot project is created in the Rural Mobility Grant Program Account for enhanced transit opportunities for agricultural workers through the establishment of vanpool programs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Transit is important in rural areas. In some cases it is peoples only access to jobs, medical appointments, or college. This makes the Rural Mobility Grant Program like the Regional Mobility Grant Program, which is in statute.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Billig, prime sponsor; Brian Lagerberg, WSDOT.