

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5700

As of February 9, 2011

Title: An act relating to certain toll facilities.

Brief Description: Concerning certain toll facilities.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen and King.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/08/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

Background: During the 2009 regular legislative session, the Legislature authorized tolling on the State Route 520 (SR 520) corridor, authorized bonds to finance construction of corridor projects, and committed to continue imposing tolls on the corridor in amounts sufficient to pay the principal and interest on the bonds. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has indicated it will be ready to start imposing tolls on the corridor in Spring of 2011, using a new electronic toll collection system, including photo tolling, authorized during the 2010 regular legislative session. As such, 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 commission's January 5 action was the adoption of administrative fees for toll collection processes.

On November 2, 2010, Washington State voters approved Initiative Measure No. 1053 (I-1053). Among other things, 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 ..." I-1053 took effect December 2, 2010. Tolls are considered 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

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.

Legislature 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 exceed the SR 520 toll rates only in amounts not greater than those sufficient to make debt service payments and other associated financing costs.

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: Requested on February 7, 2011.
[OFM requested ten-year cost projection pursuant to I-960.]

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The SR 520 corridor has critical safety needs and progress is currently being made toward addressing those needs. The financing of the floating bridge replacement project, including the issuance of bonds, is dependent on the imposition and collection of tolls on the facility. WSDOT needs a month lead time prior to early April to provide the public a date certain by which tolls will start being collected. The project may be suspended without the imposition of tolls. Millions of dollars, generally \$1 million per week, would be lost on this project without tolls starting in early April. WSDOT is currently experiencing a good bid climate and would not want to jeopardize this with a failure to start tolling the project. Many jobs are expected to result from the SR 520 corridor projects, which would help address the very high existing unemployment rate. Three hundred jobs are estimated in the Grays Harbor area alone due to the pontoon work necessary for the project. This bill works well for the Treasurer's Office and allows the state to move forward with the SR 520 project and puts the state in good position to sell bonds in a cost-effective way. Washington drivers feel safety and mobility on the SR 520 corridor are important. Microsoft and area businesses are dependent on a safe and effective SR 520 corridor for their workforce to commute on. The SR 520 bridge project supports economic vitality in the region.

OTHER: Some taxi companies have concerns with the administration of the toll collection system, but not with imposing tolls on the corridor. Having the toll be charged to the vehicle owner is a problem when some of the cabs are operated by independent contractors and not the actual owner.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Dick Ford, Transportation Commission; Dave Johnson, WA State Building Trades Council; Keith Weir, Seattle King Co. Bldg & Construction Trades Council; Dale Bright, Laborers L 440; Dave Dye, WSDOT; James McIntire, State Treasurer; Dave Overstreet, AAA Washington; Michael Groesch, Microsoft, WA Roundtable.

OTHER: Chris Van Dyk, BYG Taxi Cooperative.