

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5847

As of February 24, 2011

Title: An act relating to railroad safety.

Brief Description: Concerning railroad safety.

Sponsors: Senators Eide, Haugen and Shin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/24/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Katherine Taylor (786-7434)

Background: Currently, there is a Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC). The commission aims to protect consumers by ensuring that utility and transportation services are fairly priced, available, reliable, and safe. Additionally, as part of the commission's duties, it oversees railroad safety.

Summary of Bill: An advisory committee on railroad safety is created within UTC. The committee consists of 17 members with various required experience and/or types of current employment. The committee selects its chair from among its members. UTC provides the necessary administrative support for the committee. The members of the committee serve without compensation, but are reimbursed for travel expenses.

The committee advises UTC as the commission develops rules to improve railroad safety and operations, including addressing the following:

- walkway safety;
- corrective action needed to improve hazardous areas;
- switch and derail safety;
- usage of trackmobiles;
- retaliation by railroad carriers against rail employees who are injured on the job;
- operations of remote controlled equipment or technology and grade crossing enhancements; as well as
- defining walkways in areas between rails of a track; and
- providing penalties for violations of the rules adopted under this chapter.

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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: Yes.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Walkway safety and penalties are very important. The Washington Administrative Code does not address railroad safety, and penalties need to get people's attention.

CON: Safety is important but interested parties need to study and discuss railroad safety over the interim. Safety rules have already been put in place and the federal government, not the state government, oversees railroad safety.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Larry McKillip, United Transportation Union.

CON: Bill Stauffacher, BNSF Railway; David Danner, WUTC.