

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6518

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As of February 1, 2012

**Title:** An act relating to the executive committee of Washington state ferry users.

**Brief Description:** Concerning the executive committee of Washington state ferry users.

**Sponsors:** Senators Rolfes and Nelson.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Transportation: 2/01/12.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Staff:** Hayley Gamble (786-7452)

**Background:** Current law requires counties that contain ferry terminals to appoint ferry advisory committees (FACs) in order to provide local representation and input on ferry system issues to Washington State Ferries (WSF). San Juan, Skagit, Clallam, and Jefferson counties each have one FAC consisting of five members. Other counties containing a ferry terminal have FACs consisting of three members for each ferry terminal, except Vashon Island that has only one committee. There are currently 14 FACs. Current law restricts the number of FAC appointees that can be from one major political party. The chairs of the FACs constitute an executive committee of the FACs (EX-FAC) and are required to meet twice a year with WSF and the Transportation Commission (Commission) to review ferry system issues.

In 2010 WSF and the Commission created a committee called the Ferry Advisory Committee – Tariff (FAC-T) as an advisory committee to the Commission. The FAC-T provides advice, input and recommendations on fare proposals and tariff policy structures to WSF and the Commission. Members of FAC-T are comprised of one representative of the Department of Transportation (DOT), one Transportation Commissioner and the members of EX-FAC, or EX-FAC designees with appropriate knowledge, such as expertise on freight, transit, economic development or tourism. If designees do not have the appropriate knowledge additional participants may be invited to join FAC-T to fill knowledge gaps. The FAC-T is not required in current law or administrative code.

**Summary of Bill:** Members of the EX-FAC must meet at least twice a year with WSF and the Commission. DOT must provide technical support to EX-FAC to allow for review of

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WSF revenues and operating costs, route changes or significant service changes and other ferry system issues. EX-FAC must provide recommendations on the issues it reviews to the Commission and the Legislature on a schedule that allows for the information to be used as part of the decision-making process for legislative budget development and Commission fare-setting.

The Commission must consider information received from the EX-FAC prior to raising fares.

Language limiting the number of FAC appointees that can be from the same major political party is stricken.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 27, 2012.

**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: Taxpayers cover 70 percent of WSF operative costs and would like more involvement in the process. This uses the Tacoma Narrows Bridge citizen advisory committee as a model. San Juan Council supports this bill. If fares or other fees need to be raised, the public will be more accepting if FACs have been involved in the process and allowed to review the data. Ferry Community Partnership is a grassroots organization that supports this bill because it provides transparency to ferry riders. The Commission appreciates the advise it gets from citizens. We need to sustain the WSF system, and this will help.

OTHER: We are supportive of citizen input and transparency and work with the existing committees. Citizen involvement is very effective under the current processes and this bill will either be duplicative of current process or replace the already effective process. The current committees already do very detailed work, especially the FAC-T. The bill creates duplicative functions already done by OFM and WSF.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Rolfes, prime sponsor; Lovel Pratt, San Juan County; Kari Ulatoski, Vashon Island FCP; Walt Elliot, EX-FAC Chair; Greg Beardsley, Vashon Island FAC Chair; Tom Cowan, Commission.

OTHER: David Moseley, WSF.