

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6582

As of February 3, 2012

Title: An act relating to local transportation revenue options.

Brief Description: Concerning local transportation revenue options.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, Eide, Hobbs, Ranker and Shin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/02/12.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Amanda Cecil (786-7429)

Background: Cities and counties are authorized to impose various taxes and fees through their existing governance structure or by forming a taxing district.

One such taxing district is a transportation benefit district (TBD), which is a quasi-municipal corporation and independent taxing authority that may be established by a county or city for the purpose of funding transportation improvements within the district. Transportation improvement can include investments in city streets, county roads, new or existing highways of statewide significance, principal arterials of regional significance, high capacity transportation, and public transportation. TBD may include areas within one or more than one county, city, port district, county transportation authority, or public transportation benefit area.

TBD is authorized to impose a vehicle fee of up to \$20.00 with approval of a majority of the governing board or up to \$100.00 with approval of a majority of the voters in the district. TBD may also impose impact fees on the construction of commercial buildings; a sales and use tax of up to 0.2 percent with approval of a majority of the voters in the district; and vehicle tolls on state routes, city streets, or county roads within the boundary with approval of a majority of the voters in the district.

In addition to other taxes and fees, counties are authorized to impose:

- A property tax for county roads of up to \$2.25 per \$1,000 of assessed value. Each year a county can impose up to 101 percent of the previous year's levy, or it may impose an amount in excess of 101 percent with approval of a vote of the people.

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.

- A fuel tax of 10 percent of the statewide fuel tax rate on each gallon of fuel sold within the county. The current statewide fuel tax rate is \$0.375 per gallon, making the amount a county can impose \$0.0375 per gallon.

Summary of Bill: TBD is authorized to impose:

- a vehicle fee of up to \$40.00 with a majority vote of the district's governing board; or
- a motor vehicle excise tax of up to 1 percent of the value of the vehicle with a vote of the people.

The existing county wide fuel tax authority of 10 percent of the statewide fuel tax rate is changed to \$0.01, \$0.02, or \$0.03 per gallon of fuel and is expanded to provide that a city is authorized to impose the tax. A county may only impose a fuel tax to the extent that it has not been imposed by a city. A city or county may only impose the tax with a vote of the people.

The governing board of a county is authorized to levy up to 103 percent of the previous year's levy for county roads. If a county chooses to impose the additional 2 percent, it may not divert those funds out of the road fund.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 1, 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: Transportation benefit districts are one of the most viable tools for funding local transportation. The existing \$20 councilmanic authority generally buys back about 20 percent of a city's maintenance budget, so going to \$40 is a significant step forward. The local option gas tax is also a viable option. In Beaverton, Oregon, there was an attempt to roll their locally imposed gas tax back, and they were not able to get enough votes at the ballot to do that. The local option fuel tax for cities also already exists for border cities, so this is just expanding that authority to the rest of the cities in the state.

Local option funding tools that work are critical to funding local transportation needs. King county was able to imposed the \$20 local option congestion reduction charge, which was granted by the Legislature last year, with a bipartisan vote of the council. That has allowed them to keep buses on the road, but it is a temporary fix. They need a long-term, sustainable solution that is easy to implement, such as a 1 percent councilmanic MVET for King county. Even the taxes and fees that can be imposed by a council include a public process through public hearings so there will be a lot of opportunities for public input.

In addition to the options in this bill, the Legislature should consider further expanding the options that are available for county and city councils to impose, and local governments should have the freedom and flexibility to determine how to address their transportation needs.

CON: Car tab taxes are radioactive, and this bill violates four different citizen initiatives: I-695, I-776, I-695 and I-1053. Every time voters have voted on higher car tab taxes since 2002 they have rejected it by wide margins. Even in Seattle, it was rejected by a margin of 60 percent this last election. The new MVET has the same fatal flaw that the statewide MVET had, which is that it artificially inflates the value of a vehicle by basing it on the MSRP. Just because the counties and cities want this does not mean that you should give it to them.

There have been a number of attempts in recent years to impose local option gas taxes, and they have been unsuccessful. These are also funds that could be diverted by cash-strapped local governments to general government purposes. It will be expensive to collect because there is no system in place and it undermines the state's ability to impose additional statewide gas taxes in the future.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Randi Abrams-Caras, Cascade Bicycle Club; Adam Sherman, GPSS, UW; Sarah Round, ASUW, UW; Harold Tanaguchi, King County DOT; Scott Merriman, Assn of Counties; Ashley Probart, Assn. of Cities; Michael Groesch, Microsoft, ACEC; Carrie Dolwick, Transportation Choices Coalition.

CON: Amber Carter, AWB; Tim Eyman; Greg Hanon, Western States Petroleum Assn.