

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 2278

As Passed House:
February 12, 2014

Title: An act relating to interlocal agreements for ambulance services between fire protection districts and contiguous cities.

Brief Description: Concerning interlocal agreements for ambulance services between fire protection districts and contiguous cities.

Sponsors: Representatives Takko, Chandler and Ryu.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government: 1/22/14, 2/3/14 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/12/14, 89-9.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Authorizes all fire districts, rather than only fire districts in qualifying rural areas, to enter into contracts with a contiguous city for the furnishing of ambulance services by the city to the district.
- Establishes related public notice and hearing requirements that must be met by fire districts and cities for the furnishing of ambulance services.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Takko, Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Kochmar, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Farrell, Fitzgibbon, Pike and Springer.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Overstreet, Ranking Minority Member; Taylor.

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

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.

Fire protection districts (fire districts) are created to provide fire and emergency services to protect life and property in locations outside of cities and towns. A fire district may be established through a process involving a petition by the residents of a proposed district, a public hearing, and voter approval. Fire districts are governed by a board of three or five elected commissioners, and are authorized to impose property taxes, benefit charges, or both.

Fire districts in rural areas may enter into contracts with contiguous cities for the furnishing of emergency medical services (in the form of ambulance services) by the city to the fire district. The term "rural," as used in these ambulance service provisions, means a population density within the fire district or districts, as a whole, of 10 or fewer persons per square mile.

The contract for the furnishing of ambulance services to the fire district must be executed under the Interlocal Cooperation Act, a statutory scheme that authorizes public agencies (a term that includes fire districts) to contract with one another to provide services either through cooperative action or when one or more agencies pay another for a service. The contract between the fire district and the city, however, may not provide for the establishment of an ambulance service that would compete with an existing, private ambulance service.

Fire protection districts may impose a monthly utility service charge on each developed residential property located in the portion of the fire district or districts served under the contract. The amount of the service charge must be at a rate equal to the amount imposed by the city on similar city-developed residential property. Additionally, a city providing ambulance services to a fire district or districts under a contract may charge individuals actually using the ambulance services reasonable rates and charges for the services.

Summary of Engrossed Bill:

All fire districts, rather than only fire districts in qualifying rural areas, may enter into contracts with a contiguous city for the furnishing of ambulance services by the city to the fire district. An applicable definition of "rural" is deleted.

Prior to entering into a contract for the furnishing of emergency medical services, the commissioners of the fire district or districts and the legislative authority of the city must, separately or jointly, hold a public hearing on the proposed contract prior to its execution. Each fire district and city holding a public hearing must, separately or jointly, publish a newspaper notice of the meeting or meetings, and a summary of the proposed contract, including costs to be borne by residents or property owners in the district if the contract is executed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The bill modifies the definition of "rural" to allow other fire districts to contract with cities for ambulance services.

Only 11 or 12 cities in the state utilize the authority to establish an ambulance utility. The cities that do use the authority run the gamut from rural to urban. Currently, the ability of fire districts to contract to cities for ambulance services is very limited by the definition of rural - 10 persons per square mile. This definition is much smaller than other government definitions of "rural," including the definition used by the Census Bureau. This bill would allow a fire district to contract with the City of Kennewick for ambulance services.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Takko, prime sponsor; and Dylan Doty, Washington State Association of Fire Chiefs.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.