

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2012

As Passed House:
March 9, 2015

Title: An act relating to the department of transportation implementation of practical design.

Brief Description: Concerning the implementation of practical design by the department of transportation.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Orcutt, Clibborn, Hargrove, Hayes, Pike, Zeiger, Muri and Wilson).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/18/15, 2/24/15 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/9/15, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to use principles of practical design for project development.
- Requires the WSDOT to report annually for the first two years, then biennially thereafter on the use of practical design, the estimated cost savings, and other performance objectives and goals achieved. The report sunsets in 2025.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 22 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Farrell, Vice Chair; Fey, Vice Chair; Moscoso, Vice Chair; Orcutt, Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Harmsworth, Hayes, Kochmar, McBride, Moeller, Morris, Ortiz-Self, Pike, Rodne, Sells, Shea, Takko, Tarleton, Wilson, Young and Zeiger.

Staff: Alyssa Ball (786-7140).

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.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) defines practical design as an approach for project decisions that focuses on the need for the project and looks for cost-effective solutions. It engages local stakeholders at the earliest stages of defining scope to ensure their input is included at the beginning stage of project design. Practical design implementation is part of the WSDOT's current agency-wide reforms plan. Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6001 directs the WSDOT to implement a practical design strategy for transportation design standards and report by June 30, 2015, on where practical design has been applied or is intended to be applied and the cost savings resulting from the use of practical design.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The WSDOT must use principles of practical design for project development so that projects are based on cost efficiencies, community needs, and performance without impacting safety or operations. The WSDOT may deviate from the standard design manual if applying the standards would result in unnecessary additional costs.

The WSDOT must report on its use of practical design by November 15, 2016, and November 15, 2017, and biennially thereafter. The report sunsets in 2025. The report must include all projects in which practical design was used, the estimated cost savings for each project, and what other performance objectives or goals were achieved. Additionally, the WSDOT should include projects in which practical design was unable to be applied due to federal requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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) This bill reduces the cost on a lot of projects and makes sure that the project is designed for the community needs. The WSDOT has started applying this, but administrations, directors, and legislatures change, so it is important for this to be in statute. This is one of the four reforms the Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC) has brought forward. Using practical design is a good way to implement transportation projects. There are reporting requirements because the Legislature wants to make sure the WSDOT is following through.

The WSTC began looking into practical design in 2012 and learned the WSDOT was looking into using practical design. The WSTC applauds the WSDOT for applying practical design and believes it is important that this be codified so the work continues on.

The WSDOT is in strong support of the bill. Practical design is one of several reforms initiated by Secretary Peterson at the WSDOT two years ago. Through practical design, planners and engineers are directed to seek opportunities to avoid cost through using a

practical-design approach. Projects may see a reduced or avoided cost through practical design in a variety of ways: reduced construction cost, reduced maintenance and operations cost, or through reduced impact to the environment or the community. As the WSDOT moves towards full integration of practical design, there is an expectation of a diminishing return on the savings due to it becoming the standard practice as projects will be developed from inception using this approach and there will be no over-designed projects with which to compare to show savings.

Pierce County supports this bill and is in favor of practical design. Design is a trade-off process and is not just about money. There are lots of trade-offs being made—community needs, environmental needs, capacity needs, safety needs, and so forth. The reporting mechanism will make all of these trade-offs visible. It is requested to amend this bill slightly to bring the environmental perspective in more, as it is not mentioned in the bill, but is a large cost driver.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Orcutt, prime sponsor; Paul Parker, Washington State Transportation Commission; Allison Camden, Washington State Department of Transportation; and Brian Ziegler, Pierce County.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.