

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2414

As Reported by House Committee On: Transportation

Title: An act relating to the creation of a bistate bridge project legislative work group.

Brief Description: Creating a bistate bridge project legislative work group.

Sponsors: Representatives Wylie, Pike, Moeller, Harris, Orcutt, Vick, Wilson and McBride.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/21/16, 2/3/16 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Establishes a bistate, bipartisan bridge project work group which will be facilitated by the Washington State Transportation Commission.
- Requires the work group to identify the most affordable, efficient project that improves freight mobility, safety, and congestion on Interstate 5 adjacent to and over the Columbia River.
- Specifies that the work group should be made up of a bipartisan group of legislators from Washington and Oregon whose districts are adjacent to the project, with a preference for members who serve on their respective transportation committees.
- Requires a report on any recommendations by December 1, 2017.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 24 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Farrell, Vice Chair; Fey, Vice Chair; Moscoso, Vice Chair; Orcutt, Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Harmsworth, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Gregerson, Hayes, Hickel, Kochmar, McBride, Moeller, Morris, Pike, Riccelli, Rodne, Rossetti, Sells, Shea, Stambaugh, Tarleton and Young.

Staff: Alyssa Ball (786-7140).

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.

Background:

The Interstate 5 (I-5) Bridge crosses the Columbia River and connects Vancouver, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, with two identical bridge structures. One bridge structure carries traffic northbound to Vancouver, and the other bridge structure carries traffic southbound to Portland. The northbound bridge was built in 1917, and the southbound bridge was built in 1958. The Columbia River Crossing (CRC) Project, as described in the record of decision, will replace the I-5 bridges, extend light rail to Vancouver, improve closely spaced interchanges, and enhance the pedestrian and bicycle paths. The estimated project costs range from \$3.1 billion to \$3.5 billion. Between 2005 and 2013, \$196.6 million was spent on the project, with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) spending \$94.1 million and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) spending \$102.5 million. The project was discontinued officially in the spring of 2014.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

A bistate bridge project legislative work group is created and is to be facilitated by the Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC), with the purpose of identifying the most affordable, efficient project that improves freight mobility and safety, relieves traffic congestion, and meets the future needs of the region and the transportation corridor. Additionally, the work group will define and recommend the ongoing legislative role in moving the bistate bridge project forward.

The work group must consist of eight bipartisan, bicameral members from both the Washington and Oregon State Legislatures who represent the districts in the same region as the project, with a preference for members who serve on their respective transportation committees. The caucus leaders of both the House and the Senate must appoint an equal number of members to serve on the work group. Each legislative member must have equal voting power. Local, regional, technical, legal, and other planning and transportation resources and stakeholders may not be precluded from appropriate involvement, but may not have any voting powers.

By December 1, 2017, the work group must report its recommendations to the transportation committees of the Legislature and provide annual updates on the project to the Legislature thereafter until the project is complete.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill clarifies that caucus leaders of both the House of Representatives and the Senate must appoint an equal number of members to serve on the work group, changes the reporting date from 2016 to 2017, and removes the \$100,000 appropriation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) A long, complicated process led to the Legislature not participating in the original CRC project, and it became very partisan, but there is agreement that the Legislature needs to take the next step forward on a project solution. This bill is a signal to Oregon that the Washington Legislature is ready to take the next step on increasing capacity on I-5.

There were several issues with the original conception of the CRC project, including primary stakeholders not having a vested financial interest in the project, lack of an adequate financial plan, and the perception that the project was a Trojan horse for bringing light rail to Vancouver. This work group will serve to establish a formal agenda for legislators to move the project forward, establish communication between the primary stakeholders, balance the power structure of the committee with equal representation from both states, set up an accountability process for the members, and provide legislative direction to local government transportation agencies. It would be appreciated if the work group were to come up with a project budget in addition to the other items with which they are tasked.

This work group was originally in the budget last year but got caught up in a last-minute budget crisis and did not make it to the Governor's desk.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) There is concern that this year is not the right time for this bill and that there are a lot of conversations that need to occur before this bill is ready. There is a lot of work to do to bring Oregon on board and the state does not need any more negative publicity for this project. Additionally, the December 1, 2016, reporting date is not enough time to carry out the intended work of the work group.

The WSTC is ready and able to help the project move forward, but would suggest a later reporting due date and clarification of what is expected to be in the report.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Wylie, prime sponsor; and Dave Nelson.

(Other) Rick Wickman, Identity Clark County; and Reema Griffith, Washington State Transportation Commission.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.