

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6506

As of January 28, 2016

Title: An act relating to fostering economic resilience and development and improving the passenger and freight transportation system in Washington state by supporting the rail industry and the use of railroads for passengers and freight.

Brief Description: Establishing the legislative task force for rail transportation in Washington state.

Sponsors: Senators Chase, Darneille and Hasegawa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/27/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Hayley Gamble (786-7452)

Background: There are over 3,000 miles of railroad lines across Washington used primarily for the movement of freight. Many businesses and ports rely on rail infrastructure to move their goods locally, nationally and globally.

Passenger rail service in Washington operates along a 300 mile north-south corridor known as the Pacific Northwest Rail corridor. Washington was awarded nearly \$800 million in federal funds to deliver 20 higher speed rail projects to improve passenger rail speed and reliability.

Periodically, the legislature creates statutory taskforces to focus on topics of current interest. A legislative taskforce may meet with topic experts, provide opportunities for public testimony and provide recommendations on statutory or other changes. Recent statutory taskforces include the Joint Legislative Task Force on the Economic Resilience of Maritime and Manufacturing in Washington, and the Legislative-Executive Workforce Oversight Task Force.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

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.

Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute): The Legislative Task Force for Rail Transportation in Washington State (Task Force) is created. The Task Force is composed of 10 members as follows:

- four members from the House of Representatives, including two from each caucus appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- four members from the Senate, including two from each caucus appointed by the President of the Senate; and
- one member representing the Department of Commerce and one member representing the Department of Transportation, both appointed by the Governor.

The legislative members of the Task Force must select co-chairs from among the membership, one from the House of Representatives and one from the Senate. The co-chairs must appoint an advisory committee to provide technical information and assistance to the Task Force. In addition to the advisory committee, the Task Force must also consult with state agencies, local governments and industry representatives.

The Task Force must develop recommendations that achieve the following objectives:

- Identify opportunities for improving existing state rail programs and policies;
- Identify key rail investments that will bring the most cost-effective improvements to the rail system;
- Identify the barriers to maintaining and expanding shipping by rail and passenger rail;
- Promote regulatory consistency and certainty in the areas of transportation planning, land use permitting, and business development in a manner that supports the rail industry; and
- Encourage cooperation and partnerships between local, state, federal, and private sectors to foster increased use of the rail system and economic growth.

The Task Force must develop recommendations that include short-term and long-term action plans for the Legislature to support passenger and freight rail. Staff support for the taskforce must be provided by the joint transportation committee. The Task Force must submit a work plan by December 1, 2016, and subsequent findings and recommendations annually thereafter to the Governor and the appropriate committees of the Legislature.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 26th, 2016.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: Yes.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Ports couldn't operate without the railroads. We would like to see rail and maritime labor on the advisory committee, and the sponsor seemed amenable to this. All Aboard Washington supports this bill. This bill looks to be a statutory addition to the already existing rail caucus. Ports need sufficient supply chains, and rail is a critical part of this. There are more than 12 ports that need efficient rail. Ports representation should be specifically called out as members of the advisory committee. Ports are losing some local cargo due to rail congestion. Rail is an important part of Washington's

infrastructure. There are challenges in getting Washington goods to their markets. We need to figure out ways to grow the economy.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Chase (Sponsor); James Thompson, Washington Public Ports; Lloyd Flem, All Aboard Washington - Executive Director; Gordon Baxter, International Longshore and Warehouse Union; Todd Iverson, ILWU 23.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.