

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2179

As Reported by House Committee On: Transportation

Title: An act relating to extending the duration of the state route number 167 high occupancy toll lane pilot project.

Brief Description: Extending the duration of the state route number 167 high occupancy toll lane pilot project.

Sponsors: Representative Clibborn.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 3/27/17, 4/4/17 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Extends the duration of the State Route 167 tolling pilot project in King County.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Farrell, Vice Chair; Fey, Vice Chair; Wylie, Vice Chair; Chapman, Gregerson, Kloba, Lovick, McBride, Morris, Ortiz-Self, Pellicciotti, Riccelli and Tarleton.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Orcutt, Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Harmsworth, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hayes, Irwin, Pike, Shea, Stambaugh, Van Werven and Young.

Staff: Jennifer Harris (786-7143).

Background:

High Occupancy Vehicle and High Occupancy Toll Lanes.

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.

High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes are highway lanes reserved part-time or full-time for vehicles carrying a minimum number of occupants. These lanes are intended to facilitate the operation of transit vehicles and other multi-occupant vehicles by providing improved travel times. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has the authority to designate HOV lanes on state highways. There are currently over 200 miles of HOV lanes in operation in the central Puget Sound area.

High Occupancy Vehicle lanes may operate below capacity at times when adjacent general purpose lanes are congested. High Occupancy Vehicle lanes can be converted to High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes to utilize excess HOV-lane capacity by allowing toll-paying single occupant vehicles to use these lanes alongside vehicles that meet the occupancy requirements if a toll is paid for this use. The Legislature must designate a facility as an eligible toll facility for WSDOT to have the authority to impose charges for the use of these lanes by vehicles that do not meet WSDOT-set minimum vehicle occupancy requirements.

State Route 167 Tolling.

In 2005 the Legislature authorized an HOT-lane pilot project on State Route 167 (SR 167) in King County. The WSDOT is permitted to vary dynamic toll rates to ensure that toll-paying single-occupant vehicles are only permitted to enter the lane when the average vehicle speeds in the lane can be maintained above 45 miles per hour at least 90 percent of the time during peak hours. Toll charges may not be assessed on transit buses and vanpool vehicles owned or operated by a public agency. The WSDOT is required to modify the pilot project to address any safety issues that are identified and to mitigate any negative impacts on HOV-lane users.

High Occupancy Toll lanes on nine miles of SR 167 opened in 2008. Since that time, the facility has been expanded to 14 miles of HOT lanes from the City of Renton to the City of Pacific. The lanes are tolled between 5:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. seven days a week. Toll rates charged range from 50 cents to \$9, varying based on HOT lane speeds and traffic volumes. The HOT lanes are open to all drivers free of charge after 7:00 p.m. Vehicles with at least two occupants, vanpools, and buses may use the HOT lanes toll-free at any time.

The WSDOT is required to monitor the pilot project and to report annually to the Legislature and the Washington State Transportation Commission on: the impact of the facility on freeway efficiency and safety; its effectiveness for transit; person and vehicle movements by mode; the ability to finance improvements and transportation services through tolls; and the impacts of the facility on all highway users.

In 2016 the HOT lanes generated \$1.4 million in revenue and had operating expenses of \$834,000.

Authorization to impose tolls on SR 167 is required to expire if tolls are being collected on June 30, 2017. Authorization to impose tolls on SR 167 also would have been required to expire if no contracts were let by the WSDOT to begin construction of the HOT lanes by July 24, 2009.

Summary of Bill:

Authorization to impose tolls on SR 167 is no longer subject to expiration if tolls are being collected on June 30, 2017. Restrictions on procurement activities that are not operative under current law are also removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2017.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill maintains the SR 167 HOT lanes as a pilot project so that SR 167 HOT lanes can be revisited next year when legislation will be considered regarding other HOT lane facilities.

(Opposed) High Occupancy Toll lanes on SR 167 have been a complete failure. They have caused additional delays in commute times in the Kent-Auburn valley since the pilot project began eight years ago. The HOT lanes have negatively impacted vehicle throughput, as well as people, society, freight movement, and the regional economy. The cost to collect tolls seems too high based on the total in expenditures spent on this portion of SR 167. The pilot study was intended to end at the end of June of this year, and should be terminated at that time.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Clibborn, prime sponsor.

(Opposed) Victor Bishop, Eastside Transportation Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.