
Transportation Committee

SB 6354

Brief Description: Allowing counties to request ferry capital improvement funds without creating ferry districts.

Sponsors: Senator Ericksen.

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides that any county making a request for county ferry capital funds is not required to create a ferry district as a condition of eligibility for county road administration funding.

Hearing Date: 2/21/18

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

County Road Administration Board.

The County Road Administration Board (CRAB) is a nine-member board comprised of six county commissioners or councilmembers and three county engineers. The CRAB establishes and maintains Standards of Good Practice, to guide and ensure consistency and professional management of county road departments, and funds county road preservation and improvement programs.

The CRAB may also evaluate requests from Pierce, Skagit, Wahkiakum, and Whatcom counties for county ferry capital improvements. If approved by the CRAB, these requests are submitted to the Legislature for approval and may be funded from that portion of the gas tax otherwise distributed directly to counties. Any county seeking ferry capital funds must first seek funding through the public works trust fund, or any other available revenue source, where appropriate.

The CRAB agency rules relating to counties seeking ferry capital funds limit a ferry capital grant to \$10 million per project and \$500 thousand in total annual reimbursement. The CRAB rules

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also limit the capital ferry grant to a maximum share of the total project cost based on the amount of revenue generated by a ferry district created by the applicant county. If a county has not formed a ferry district, the ferry capital improvement program grant is limited to up to 30 percent of the project cost, subject to the maximum \$10 million per project.

County Ferry Districts.

In lieu of a county directly operating and maintaining a ferry system, a county legislative authority may adopt an ordinance creating a county ferry district (district) in all or a portion of the area of the county. There is one district currently in existence, in King County.

A district is considered an independent taxing authority and may levy a property tax not to exceed \$0.75 per \$1,000 of assessed value, except that a district located in a county with a population of 1.5 million or more may not levy at a rate that exceeds \$0.075 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. A district may construct, purchase, operate, and maintain passenger-only ferries, incur general indebtedness, and issue general obligation bonds for passenger-only ferries and associated terminals. Revenue from the tax may only be used for providing ferry services; operating, maintaining and improving vessels and dock facilities; providing shuttle services; landside improvements directly related to passenger-only ferry services; and related personnel costs.

Summary of Bill:

Any county making a request for county ferry capital funds is not required to create a ferry district as a condition of eligibility for county road administration funding.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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