

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5414

As of February 8, 2017

Title: An act relating to public transportation services for elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

Brief Description: Concerning public transportation services for elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

Sponsors: Senators Fortunato, Rivers, Miloscia and Zeiger.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/08/17.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires certain transit systems to provide paratransit services and services for elderly persons, throughout the entire service areas.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Hayley Gamble (786-7452)

Background: Transit Systems Taxing Authority. Twenty-nine transit systems in Washington are funded partly through the collection of local sale and use tax as authorized under RCW 82.14.045. The transit systems in Garfield County and the city of Pullman do not currently collect sales and use tax, and Sound Transit is authorized to collect sales tax under RCW 81.104.170.

Transit Services for Persons with Disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires public transit systems to provide paratransit services. Paratransit is only for people with disabilities who cannot use fixed route bus or rail service and is characterized as transit service with flexible routes and scheduling that can provide door-to-door or point-to-point transportation on request. People wishing to use paratransit service must meet certain qualifying requirements and may qualify on a temporary or permanent basis depending on their disability.

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 ADA requires paratransit services to be available in the same service areas and during the same hours of operation as the rest of the transit system. Paratransit service must be provided by transit agencies as long as the trip starts and ends within 3/4 of a mile of a bus route or rail station. Some transit systems voluntarily offer paratransit services further from their fixed route system. In some areas of the state where there are no or limited transit systems, paratransit services are provided through non-profit transportation providers. Transit systems may also choose to provide required paratransit services through contracts with non-profit providers.

Paratransit Service and Special Needs Population in Washington. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) 2015 Summary of Public Transportation estimates there are 908,818 residents with a disability and an additional 652,546 residents who are over the age of 65 but not disabled. In 2015, Washington's transit systems provided over 4.3 million paratransit passenger trips at a cost of over \$180 million in operating expenses, and non-profit transportation providers provided over 210,000 passenger trips at a cost of \$6.5 million.

Summary of Bill: Transit systems imposing a sales and use tax under RCW 82.12.045 are required to provide transportation services, such as paratransit or dial-a-ride, throughout their entire service areas to:

- people over 70;
- people with physical disabilities described in RCW 46.19.010, which includes people with limited mobility or vision; and
- people with developmental disabilities as defined in RCW 71A.10.020 which includes disabilities causing continued and substantial limitations to that person, such as epilepsy, cerebral palsy, and autism.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Having personal experience assisting people with special needs to get to church and seeing a family member with cerebral palsy lose their job and transportation options, this is an important issue. I would like to help provide additional service without such a large fiscal impact. Costs can be a challenge but there are different options. More bus shelters would be an improvement to the system.

CON: We cannot support this bill at this time due to the impact on resources.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Phil Fortunato, Prime Sponsor; Cindi Laws, Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Association of Washington; Marie Jubie, advocate.

CON: Justin Leighton, Washington State Transit Association.

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