

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5806

As Passed Senate, February 27, 2017

Title: An act relating to preliminary work to develop a process for planning for a new Interstate 5 bridge spanning the Columbia river.

Brief Description: Concerning preliminary work to develop a process for planning for a new Interstate 5 bridge spanning the Columbia river.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Cleveland, Rivers, Wilson, Hobbs, Chase and Nelson).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/20/17, 2/21/17 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed Senate: 2/27/17, 45-4.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Establishes a Joint Oregon-Washington legislative action committee to address many purposes, including beginning a process towards project development for a new Interstate 5 (I-5) bridge.
- Appropriates \$350,000 for Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to do a planning inventory to document data related to the construction of a new I-5 bridge over the Columbia River.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5806 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators King, Chair; Sheldon, Vice Chair; Hobbs, Ranking Minority Member; Liias, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cleveland, Ericksen, Fortunato, Hawkins, O'Ban, Saldaña, Takko, Van De Wege, Walsh and Wilson.

Staff: Kim Johnson (786-7472)

Background: The I-5 Bridge crosses the Columbia River and connects Vancouver, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, with two identical bridge structures. One bridge structure

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carries traffic northbound to Vancouver; the other bridge structure carries traffic southbound to Portland. The northbound bridge was built in 1917; the southbound bridge was built in 1958. The bridges both include one vertical lift span.

In 1997, a process was enacted to expedite the development of industrial projects of statewide significance. To qualify for designation as a project of statewide significance, a project must meet capital investment or job creation requirements. Border-crossing projects, private projects investing in manufacturing, research, and development, projects that will provide a net environmental benefit, and a project that will further commercialization of an innovation may all be designated as projects of statewide significance. An application for designation as a project of statewide significance must be submitted to the Department of Commerce. The application must include a letter of approval from jurisdictions where a project is located and must commit to providing the local staff necessary to expedite the completion of a project.

Counties and cities requesting a project's designation as one of statewide significance must ensure the participation of local officials on the public-private team expediting a project's completion. Counties and cities with projects must enter into agreements with the Office of Regulatory Assistance (ORA) and local project managers to expedite the processes necessary for the design and construction of projects. ORA must provide facilitation and coordination services to expedite completion of industrial projects of statewide significance. The project proponents may provide the funding necessary for the local jurisdiction to hire the staff required to expedite the process.

Summary of First Substitute Bill: The process for designating a project of statewide significance is modified to allow for a legislative designation. Projects of statewide significance that are designated by the Legislature are exempted from the application requirements.

A Joint Oregon-Washington legislative action committee is established regarding the construction of a new I-5 bridge. The committee is tasked with achieving the following purposes:

- works with both states' departments of transportation, transportation commissions, and stakeholders to begin a process toward project development;
- reviews and confirms lead roles related to permitting, construction, operation, and maintenance of a future I-5 bridge project;
- establishes a process to seek public comment on the I-5 bridge project development plan;
- works to ensure that there are sufficient resources available to the state departments of transportation to inventory and utilize existing data to allow for non-duplicative and efficient decision-making regarding a new project;
- examines all potential mass transit options available for a new I-5 bridge project;
- utilizes design build procurement or better innovative project delivery method and determines the least costly, most efficient project management and best practices tools;
- considers the creation of a Columbia River bridge authority to review bridge needs and make recommendations to both states regarding financing, timing of improvements, and operations of the bridges; and

- reports to the Legislatures of each state the findings and recommendations of the legislative action committee by December 15, 2018.

The joint legislative action committee is comprised of sixteen members, eight from each state. The majority leader and minority leader of the Senate must appoint four members, two from each of the two largest caucuses. The Speaker of the House of Representatives must appoint four members, two from each of the two largest caucuses. Staff support must be provided by the Senate Committee Services and the House Office of Program Research. Each meeting of the legislative action committee must allow an opportunity for public comment.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) must conduct a planning inventory to document existing planning data related to the construction of a new I-5 bridge. WSDOT must report back to the Legislature on the details of the planning inventory.

Appropriation: \$350,000 of the Motor Vehicle fund is appropriated to WSDOT for a planning inventory.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: Yes.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: The last week our community celebrated a milestone. It has been 100 years since the opening of the northbound span of the I-5 bridge. The bridge has witnessed so many things over the years and now supports over 60,000 crossings per day. As the main state freeway between Mexico and Canada, I-5 serves as the backbone of commerce for the west coast of North America. The current bridge is a drawbridge and brings to a stop to interstate traffic and is the only drawbridge still operating on an interstate in our nation. Our region has seen greater than 50 percent year over year increase in traffic. What has not changed in the past century is the complexity of coordinating a bridge replacement with all of the levels of government and stakeholders. Efforts have been ongoing. CRC failed due to lack of funding from Washington. There was disagreement between south west Washington legislators. I am pleased to bring before you a bill that represents the 17th, 18th and the 49th legislative districts. The bill represents a willingness and commitment to work together to move forward. I realize it would be a lot easier to continue to disagree than for us to do the work it will take to finally find consensus.

This project has been included as part of the local 20 year transportation plan. Growth within this area is aggressive. We will have over 120,000 more people in our region over the next planning horizon and corridor conditions continue to deteriorate. This bill sets out a bipartisan and bistate collaboration. This project is critical to our state's economy. The I-5 bridge continues to negatively impact trade on the entire west coast. The designation of the project as one of statewide significance tees this project up to be ready to expedite permits once we have a project ready to go.

Our community has lost several companies just because of the congestion created by the old bridge. This is critical to my city. The bridge was designed to carry a truck that weighed 15,000 pounds that only traveled 25 mph and is just not meeting the needs of today's traffic. If one of the bridges crossing the Columbia in the region goes down, the entire region will grind to a halt. It will be devastating. We need to start and a bipartisan and bistate process to move forward and begin again a process to help our region move forward with replacing this critical infrastructure.

OTHER: The Legislature needs to be very careful here. I would be cautious of anything that may seem like an end run around the local government. This bill itself is not bad. An Oregon engineer has said that this bridge can be maintained well into the future. Washington is already subsidizing a massive bedroom community for Portland.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Annette Cleveland, Prime Sponsor; Ron Onslow, Mayor, City of Ridgefield; Sean Guard, Mayor City of Washougal; Jack Burkman, City Councilman, City of Vancouver (USA); Mike Bomar, Columbia River Economic Development Council; Matt Ransom, Regional Transportation Council; Mike Ennis, Association of Washington Business; Bob Schaeffer, SW WA High Tech Council; Ed Barnes, Chair Clark County Labor Council; Mike Iyall, Cowlitz Tribal Council; Ron Arp, Identity Clark County and Clark County Transportation Alliance; Paul Harris, Representative, 17th LD; Lynda Wilson, Senator, 17th LD.

OTHER: Craig Keller, Save Our Choice.

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