

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6054

As of January 15, 2018

Title: An act relating to requiring the department of transportation to complete a study on passenger-only ferry services.

Brief Description: Requiring the department of transportation to complete a study on passenger-only ferry services.

Sponsors: Senator Hunt.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/15/18.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Transportation (DOT) to complete a study of ferry service between Olympia and Seattle.
- Requires a report to the Legislature by January 7, 2019.
- Requires funding to be provided in the 2018 supplemental transportation budget, or else the bill becomes null and void.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Hayley Gamble (786-7452)

Background: Scheduled travel by water began in Puget Sound in the 1850s on a variety of vessels. These vessels, later known collectively as the "Mosquito" fleet, offered passenger service to destinations including Olympia and Seattle. By the 1930s these services were greatly reduced, and eventually replaced in 1951 by a state operated ferry service. There are currently several public ferry systems serving various parts of Puget Sound:

- the Washington State Ferry System serves central and northern Puget Sound;
- King County passenger ferries serve Vashon Island and Seattle; and
- Kitsap Transit passenger ferries serve Bremerton, Port Orchard and Seattle.

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.

There are also several private ferry operators in Puget Sound and public ferries in other areas of the state. Currently, there are no public or private ferry services operating in south Puget Sound.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature recognizes the need for alternative strategies to provide reliable travel times in Puget Sound and the potential to use waterways as travel options.

DOT shall complete a consultant study on the feasibility, need and potential governance and funding structures for passenger ferry service between Olympia and Seattle. The study will look at both a fast service and a slower service with additional stops. The department is directed to work with stakeholders and submit a final study to the transportation committees of the Legislature by January 7, 2019.

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. Includes a null and void clause.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: UW Tacoma and Evergreen students support this bill. This option might allow Evergreen students to take more classes in Seattle. Alternative transportation options are vital for students, especially in Tacoma which is a commuter campus. Some students commute from far away and a ferry would be an alternative option. I-5 is a limiting factor in Puget Sound. People travelling between Thurston, King, and Pierce counties would benefit from a POF service. This could be an environmentally friendly alternative to road travel. Washington needs an alternative to Interstate 5.

POF systems benefit direct users, tourists, local businesses and relieve rail and highway options. Existing infrastructure in Olympia will help keep capital costs for a POF service down. Federal funds are available for this kind of service. Other POF models already exist here . There is a lot of momentum for POF in Puget Sound.

OTHER: This is an excellent idea to provide POF service throughout the Puget Sound Region as an alternative to Interstate 5 and other options. Tacoma would like to see this study cover a broader array of options and to look at more routes. The Port of Olympia does not have a position yet on this bill. The Port of Olympia did study this 30 years ago on a fleet of ferries in the South Puget Sound, at that time POF did not pencil out. There are other studies that could also inform this study. A good study may require more than \$200,000.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Sam Hunt, Prime Sponsor; Charles Adkins, Director of Legislative Affairs, Geoduck Student Union; Adán Espino Jr, University of Washington Tacoma; Michael Doctor, Hornblower Marine Services.

OTHER: Briahna Murray, City of Tacoma; Eric Johnson, WA Public Ports Association.

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