

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6186

As of January 24, 2018

Title: An act relating to reforming the growth management act to provide infrastructure for unplanned growth in counties.

Brief Description: Reforming the growth management act to provide infrastructure for unplanned growth in counties.

Sponsors: Senators Palumbo and Zeiger.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Local Government: 1/18/18.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires annual growth monitoring reports for counties planning under the Growth Management Act (GMA).
- Directs that in the fourth year following comprehensive plan adoptions, if any given subarea is at 65 percent or more of planned growth, then the county, the regional transportation planning organization, and any applicable transit authority must amend their planning documents, including the comprehensive plan.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Staff: Greg Vogel (786-7413)

Background: GMA - Introduction. The GMA is the comprehensive land use planning framework for counties and cities in Washington. The GMA sets forth three broad planning obligations for those counties and cities who plan fully under the GMA:

- the county legislative authority must adopt a countywide planning policy;
- the county, and the cities within the county, must designate critical areas, agricultural lands, forestlands, and mineral resource lands, and adopt development regulations accordingly; and
- the county must designate and take other actions related to Urban Growth Areas (UGAs).

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.

GMA - Comprehensive Plans. Each county and each city planning under all GMA requirements must adopt a comprehensive plan that is consistent with the county-wide planning policy for that county. A comprehensive plan must include a number of elements, including a land use element, housing element, capital facilities element, utilities element, transportation element, economic development element, parks and recreation element, provisions for designating critical areas, and provisions for designating natural resource lands. County comprehensive plans must also designate final UGAs and include a rural element controlling growth in rural portions of the county.

GMA - Comprehensive Plan Updates. Counties and cities are required to review and, if needed, revise their comprehensive plans and development regulations every eight years. Counties, and the cities within them, are grouped into four different year-classes for purposes of when the obligation to review and revise their comprehensive plans commences. King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties are required to review and revise their comprehensive plans no later than June 30, 2015, and every eight years thereafter. Ten other counties—Clallam, Clark, Island, Jefferson, Kitsap, Mason, San Juan, Skagit, Thurston, and Whatcom—are required to review and revise their comprehensive plans no later than June 30, 2016, and every eight years thereafter. The remaining counties are divided into the 2017 and 2018 year-classes for comprehensive plan review and revision.

Summary of Bill: Fully planning counties under the GMA must produce an annual growth monitoring report (report) within two months of the close of its fiscal year. The report must include population growth trends, employment growth trends, annexation trends, and residential development trends. At least one public hearing must be held on the results of the report.

If, in the fourth year following the periodic update of a comprehensive plan, the report finds that the population of any given subarea is at 65 percent or more of its planned growth, with the unplanned 15 percent or more equal to at least 1000 people, then:

- the county must amend its county budget and the housing element, the capital facilities plan element, and the transportation element of its comprehensive plan;
- any regional transportation planning organization that serves the subarea must amend its regional transportation plan and budget; and
- any transit authority that serves the subarea must amend its service plan to accommodate the unplanned growth.

At least one public hearing must be held on any proposed amendments. Additionally, amendments to a comprehensive plan may be considered immediately.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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: The idea here is that when jurisdictions do these planning documents under the GMA, they should plan for growth and future transit, but in the meantime, the free market chooses where people actually want to live. Unplanned growth is occurring in areas such as Bothell and Mukilteo. The problem with the GMA is that it has no teeth. At no time does the GMA force counties to look at and adjust for unplanned growth. The report is a look back at where did everybody in counties move within subareas. If the growth is explosive, so far ahead of the target, a public meeting is required to amend the comprehensive plan—the bill does not tell them what to do, but does require them to make changes.

OTHER: There is appreciation for what is being brought forward and concerns are shared for how and where growth is going. There needs to be a way to provide teeth in order to push growth towards cities and provide more housing options near transit for an efficient use of dollars. The reporting requirements of the bill are good, but there are some concerns about updating the regional transportation plan, which takes a lot of work. If growth is there, how can funds be provided to support counties in this process.

CON: There is a Ruckelshaus process looking at the GMA, and the issue really is all about funding. How do counties pay for GMA mandates that come down as a state initiative? Since the original grant money, there has been no funding for long range planning. The counties are strapped, largely due to criminal justice, and have no revenue options. When the GMA was originally done, there was going to be a change into how to address revenue when shifting growth, but that change never came. Growth in the state is focused in a few areas, but most of the counties have very small growth, even negative growth.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Guy Palumbo, Prime Sponsor.

CON: Bryce Yadon, Futurewise.

OTHER: Laura Berg, Washington State Association of Counties.

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