

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6195

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Transportation, January 31, 2018

Title: An act relating to facilitating transportation projects of statewide significance.

Brief Description: Facilitating transportation projects of statewide significance.

Sponsors: Senators Cleveland, Rivers and Wilson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/24/18, 1/31/18 [DPS].

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Provides criteria for a transportation project of statewide significance.
- Requires the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to develop an application process for the designation of a transportation project of statewide significance.
- Directs WSDOT to assign a project coordinator and assemble a team of state and local government and private officials to help meet the project planning and permitting needs and work to expedite their actions.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6195 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hobbs, Chair; King, Ranking Member; Dhingra, Fortunato, Lias, McCoy, Takko, Wellman and Zeiger.

Staff: Kim Johnson (786-7472)

Background: WSDOT. Presently, there is no process within WSDOT to designate a transportation project of statewide significance.

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 is also no one within WSDOT tasked solely with facilitating and coordinating the permitting and other project delivery tasks with other agencies and levels of government for mega projects.

Department of Commerce/Office of Regulatory Assistance. 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.

In 2017, the Legislature amended this process to allow for the Legislature to designate a project of statewide significance. Additionally, the Joint Oregon-Washington Legislative Action Committee was directed to make a recommendation to the legislatures of both Oregon and Washington on whether the I-5 bridge replacement should be designated by both states as a project of statewide significance.

Summary of Bill (First Substitute): A transportation project of statewide significance means a project that will meet certain criteria that include: improving the reliability of commute times and movement of freight through the corridor, maximizing opportunities for economic development in the region, and providing safety improvements. The reasonable cost estimate to construct a transportation project of statewide significance must be at least one billion dollars.

WSDOT must develop an application for designation of transportation projects of statewide significance. The application must include a letter of approval from the legislative authority of any jurisdiction that will have the proposed project within its boundaries. Jurisdictions must provide the professional staff required to expedite the processes necessary to complete the project. Project proponents may provide the funding necessary for a jurisdiction to hire professional staff necessary for expediting the permits.

The application must also contain information about the project, including how the project meets the specified criteria and any other information required by WSDOT.

The Legislature may also designate a transportation project as one of statewide significance which makes the project eligible for the project coordination process.

After designating a transportation project of statewide significance, WSDOT must assemble a team of state and local government and private officials to help meet the planning, permitting and development needs of each designated project. WSDOT must work with the team to expedite their actions to further the project and coordinate any cross border communications, if applicable.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (First Substitute): Removes the requirement that the project can provide the direct employment of at least 1500 persons over the life of the project.

Clarifies that the billion dollar qualification threshold is based on the the reasonable cost estimate to construct the project.

Removes the requirement that the project coordination team that is assembled after a transportation project is designated include a representative from higher education.

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 on Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: Three weeks from now the I-5 bridge will reach its 101st birthday. It is long past time to replace this bridge. We passed a bipartisan bill last year to restart the planning effort and have started the framework for a process to replace the bridge. We have heard from the business community loud and clear on how crucial it is that we replace this critical infrastructure. Additionally, we need to demonstrate to our other partners that our firm is committed to replace the bridge and improve transit. This provides an additional tool to assist in the replacement effort. This bill creates an important designation within WSDOT of a transportation project of statewide significance, which in turn triggers a coordination team to work towards expediting the project. We need as many viable tools available to us as possible.

We support this bill and see real value in it. Streamlining state agency implementation and coordination will get the state into the role as a partner and a facilitator. As a city leader and businessman, I thank you for your efforts to restart the conversation on how to move forward. It prepares us to expedite plans that will result from the bipartisan working group you created last year. We welcome Oregon. Coordination makes for a better result in the end. With the population booming in Clark County we need the infrastructure to support the movement of people and goods.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Annette Cleveland, Prime Sponsor; Amber Carter, Port of Vancouver; Ron Arp, Identity Clark County; Helen Devery, Clark County Realtors; Ryan Davis, Clark County Realtors; Ron Onslow, Mayor, City of Ridgefield and Chair SW Washington Regional Transportation Council; Mike Ennis, Association of Washington Business.

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