
Transportation Committee

HB 1397

Brief Description: Encouraging the use of electric or hybrid-electric aircraft for regional air travel.

Sponsors: Representatives Slatter, Dent, Fey, Orcutt, Kloba, Valdez, Wylie, Pollet, Fitzgibbon, Tharinger, Morris, Eslick, Doglio and Ortiz-Self.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to convene a work group to study the electric aircraft industry and assess infrastructure needs related to electric aircraft for commercial air travel in Washington.
- Revises the WSDOT's general supervision of aeronautics to include aeronautics involving electrically powered aircraft.

Hearing Date: 2/7/19

Staff: Patricia Hasan (786-7292).

Background:

Washington State Department of Transportation Aviation.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has general supervision of aeronautics within Washington. The WSDOT is directed to encourage, foster, and assist in the development of aeronautics in Washington and to encourage the establishment of airports and air navigation facilities. Air navigation facilities are used to provide aid in air navigation and include any structures, mechanisms, lights, beacons, markers, communicating systems, or other instruments or devices used as an aid to safe taking-off, navigation, and landing of an aircraft or of the safe operation and maintenance of an airport. The WSDOT is also directed to cooperate with and assist the federal government, municipalities of Washington, and other bodies in developing aeronautics.

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 current Washington Aviation System Plan (Plan) includes discussion on emerging trends and issues in aircraft innovation that the WSDOT anticipates will become relevant during the next 20 years. According to the Plan, electrically powered aircraft is one such innovation that is likely to become more widespread. Electric aircraft are allowable under Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) rules, and currently most are used primarily for experiments and demonstrations.

Electric Aircraft Work Group.

In the 2018 Legislative Session, the 2018 Supplemental Transportation Budget included direction to the WSDOT to convene an electric aircraft work group. The work group was tasked with analyzing the state of the electrically powered aircraft industry and assess infrastructure needs related to the deployment of electric or hybrid-electric aircraft for commercial air travel in Washington. The work group must report its findings and recommendations to the transportation committees of the Legislature by June 30, 2019. The authority for this work group expires at the end of the 2017-19 biennium, which is June 30, 2019.

Summary of Bill:

Washington State Department of Transportation Aviation.

Specific language directing the WSDOT to develop and sustain aeronautics involving electrically powered aircraft is added to the WSDOT's statute on general supervision over aeronautics.

Electric Aircraft Work Group.

The WSDOT is directed to convene a work group to study the state of the electrically powered aircraft industry and assess infrastructure needs related to the deployment of electric or hybrid-electric aircraft for commercial air travel in Washington. The work group must be comprised of representatives from several industries related to electric or hybrid-electric aircraft, and the chair of the work group may be a consultant specializing in aeronautics.

The study must include recommendations to further the advancement of the electrification of aircraft for regional commercial use within Washington, including specific, measurable goals for the years 2030, 2040, and 2050 that reflect progressive and substantial increases in the utilization of electric and hybrid-electric commercial aircraft. The work group must submit a report and accompanying recommendation to the transportation committees of the Legislature by November 15, 2020. By February 15, 2021, and every two years thereafter, the WSDOT must provide an electronic progress report on any efforts to implement the recommendations to the transportation committees of the Legislature.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.