
Transportation Committee

HB 1994

Brief Description: Facilitating transportation projects of statewide significance.

Sponsors: Representatives Wylie, Vick, Stonier, Hoff and Harris.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates processes for designating certain transportation projects as transportation projects of statewide significance.
- Requires the Washington State Department of Transportation to take certain actions for each transportation project of statewide significance.

Hearing Date: 2/20/19

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

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. The ORA must provide facilitation and coordination

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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.

The Washington Legislature may also designate a project as a project of statewide significance, and such a project is not subject to the application process that otherwise applies.

Summary of Bill:

In order to qualify as a transportation project of statewide significance, the project must:

- have a reasonable cost estimate to construct of more than \$1 billion;
- improve accessibility for a significant number of Washington residents;
- alleviate congestion and improve the reliability of travel times for Washington residents and other users of the transportation system;
- improve the movement of freight through the corridor;
- provide safety improvements and contribute to a reduction in injuries and fatalities;
- maximize opportunities for economic development in the region and the state;
- make improvements to transit, pedestrian, and bike access; and
- serve as a critical route for both national and state defense.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is required to develop an application for a transportation project of statewide significance. An application must be accompanied by a letter of approval from the legislative authority of any jurisdiction that will have the proposed transportation project of statewide significance within its boundaries. The letter of approval must state that the jurisdiction joins in the request for the designation of the transportation project as one of statewide significance and has or will hire the professional staff to expedite the processes necessary for the completion of the project. Project proponents may provide the funding necessary for the jurisdiction to hire the professional staff. The application must contain information regarding the location of the project, how the project meets the criteria for a transportation project of statewide significance, and other information required by the WSDOT.

Projects may be designated as a transportation project of statewide significance by the WSDOT, through the completion of the application process, or by the Legislature.

The WSDOT is required to assign a project coordinator to each designated transportation project of statewide significance. This coordinator must assemble a team of state and local government and private officials to help meet the planning, permitting, and development needs of the project. This team must include those responsible for planning, permitting, licensing, infrastructure development, workforce development services, transportation services, and the provision of utilities. The coordinator must work with each team member to expedite their actions in furtherance of the project and coordinate any cross border communications, if applicable.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 11, 2019.

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