

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5220

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As of March 1, 2019

**Title:** An act relating to the election and authority of regional transit authority board members.

**Brief Description:** Modifying the election and authority of regional transit authority board members.

**Sponsors:** Senators O'Ban, Palumbo, Conway, Becker and Zeiger.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Transportation: 2/26/19.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Changes the board of a Regional Transit Authority from appointed to elected.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Staff:** Hayley Gamble (786-7452)

**Background:** A Regional Transit Authority (RTA) is authorized to use its tax revenues to plan, construct, and operate high-capacity transportation, such as express bus service and light rail. There is currently one RTA—Sound Transit—which operates light rail, commuter rail, and express bus service in Puget Sound. An RTA is governed by a board consisting of no more than 25 members, based on one member per 145,000 of population within a member county. Currently there are 18 members on the Sound Transit board.

Board members are locally elected officials appointed by the county executive and confirmed by the county legislative body. At least half of all appointees from each county must serve on the governing body of a public transportation system. The secretary of transportation, or designee, also sits on the board of an RTA.

**Summary of Bill:** Eleven non-partisan RTA board members must be directly elected in 2020 from 11 districts containing approximately equal shares of the population. Board members may not hold other elected offices. Additionally, the secretary of transportation, or designee, is a non-voting member of the board.

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*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.*

A five-member districting commission must be appointed by the Governor as soon as possible and shall be funded by the RTA to define the 11 districts. An 11-district plan provided by the districting commission must ensure population is evenly divided between districts and that no more than five districts are solely within one county. A new commission will repeat the districting process every ten years after the release of census data. Elected members will serve four-year, staggered terms.

RTA board member salaries are set at an amount equal to state legislator salaries.

Election costs incurred by local jurisdictions for administering the election of a RTA's board will be reimbursed by the RTA.

This bill applies to current and future RTAs.

**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:** PRO: No taxation without representation. It defies tradition, norms and reason not to directly elect the board of Sound Transit. Direct elections allow responsiveness to the electorate. This bill is all about accountability. Projects have not been delivered as promised. Changing the governance of the Board is a long-standing policy recommendation of the Washington Policy Center. This bill is a step in the right direction providing a reasonable check and balance on the agency.

CON: 5220 elected board. Sound Transit opposed this legislation. Concerns on accountability, integration and local government representation. Half of board members from each county must also sit on Transit boards. Less populated areas would have less impact than they have today. This bill would illuminate local government representation. Council members bring forward a lot of knowledge to the Sound Transit board, they also understand local land use.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Steve O'Ban, Prime Sponsor; Victor Bishop, Eastside Transportation Association, Chair Emeritus; Mariya Frost, Washington Policy Center.

CON: John Marchione, Chair, Sound Transit Board; Bryce Yadon, Transportation Choices Coalition.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** OTHER: Tim Eyman, \$30 Tabs Initiative.