

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5847

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As of February 27, 2019

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

**Brief Description:** Facilitating transportation projects of statewide significance.

**Sponsors:** Senators Cleveland, Rivers, Wilson, L., Hasegawa and Kuderer.

**Brief History:**

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

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Provides criteria for a transportation project of statewide significance.
- Requires the Washington State Department of Transportation (DOT) to develop an application process for the designation of a transportation project of statewide significance.
- Directs DOT 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.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Staff:** Kim Johnson (786-7472)

**Background:** Washington State Department of Transportation. Presently, there is no process within DOT to designate a transportation project of statewide significance. There is also no one within DOT tasked solely to facilitate and coordinate permitting and other project delivery tasks with other agencies and levels of government for mega projects.

Department of Commerce and Office of Regulatory Assistance. In 1997, a process was enacted to expedite developing 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

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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 an approval letter from jurisdictions where a project is located and must commit to providing the local staff necessary to expedite completing a project.

In 2017, the Legislature amended this process to allow for the Legislature to designate a project of statewide significance.

**Summary of Bill:** A transportation project of statewide significance means a project that will meet certain criteria including:

- alleviating congestion and 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 \$1 billion.

DOT 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 DOT.

The Legislature may also designate a transportation project as one of statewide significance, which makes the project subject to the project coordination process.

After designating a transportation project of statewide significance, DOT 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. DOT must work with the team to expedite their actions to further the project and coordinate any cross border communications, if applicable.

**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: As our state continues to grow we have a need to improve our infrastructure, especially our megaprojects. This bill is meant to create a

means of expediting our most crucial infrastructure projects that will have impact the greatest number of our citizens. These projects take a long time to develop consensus and therefore we need to have a great number of tools at our disposal to deliver the projects. These projects often occur on our national defense routes within our state and therefore are critical for national defense and mobilization. One of the future megaprojects is in my district, the I-5 Bridge, which just turned 100 years old.

This bill will create an efficient regulatory pathway for transportation projects of statewide significance. When our state pursues large transportation projects involving multiple jurisdictions and sources of funds, understanding the regulatory sequence in advance will help to create a clear path forward for all parties. This just makes sense. The I-5 Bridge would definitely benefit from this. Replacement of infrastructure is a priority and we support all efforts designating the I-5 Bridge as a project of statewide significance. This reflects a strong bipartisan effort in our region as we look forward to a new bridge project in our region.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Annette Cleveland, Prime Sponsor; Ron Arp, Indentity Clark County; Brian Enslow, City of Vancouver; Megan Reed, Port of Vancouver.

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