

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5750

As of February 21, 2023

Title: An act relating to the operating and maintenance deficit of the Wahkiakum county ferry.

Brief Description: Addressing the operating and maintenance deficit of the Wahkiakum county ferry.

Sponsors: Senators Wilson, J. and Lovelett.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/21/23.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Increases to 85 percent the amount of operating and maintenance deficit for the Wahkiakum County ferry the Washington State Department of Transportation can support.
- Eliminates the restriction for payments to Wahkiakum County to not exceed biennial appropriation amounts.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Jenna Forty (786-7755)

Background: The Wahkiakum County ferry operates between Puget Island and Westport on the Columbia River. Under current law, counties are authorized to operate ferry service within or between counties and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) may reimburse up to 80 percent of the operations and maintenance of the service.

The total of the WSDOT and Wahkiakum County contract is limited by the appropriation to the local programs division, which is approximately \$1.38 million per biennium. There is a

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requirement that Wahkiakum County ferry fares be comparable to those used for similar runs on the state ferry system.

Summary of Bill: The reimbursement rate for the agreement between Wahkiakum County and WSDOT is raised to 85 percent of the operating and maintenance deficit of the service. The limitation that payments do not exceed the amount appropriated within the biennium is eliminated.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 20, 2023.

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: The highways around Cathlamet are frequently subject to closure and the Wahkiakum County ferry is a critical link for county residents. The county absorbs the overages for the ferry operations that deplete the county road funds, the support is important for the entire county.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Jeff Wilson, Prime Sponsor; Gene Strong, Wahkiakum County.

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