
Transportation Committee

SSB 5207

Brief Description: Concerning a study to evaluate the imposition of a fee on the processing of shipping containers, port-related user fees, and other funding mechanisms to improve freight corridors; creating the freight congestion relief account.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Haugen, Murray and Spanel).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Joint Transportation Committee to study container fees as a means to fund freight infrastructure improvements.
- Creates the Freight Congestion Relief Account.
- Identifies projects for future funding.

Hearing Date: 3/26/07

Staff: Jerry Long (786-7306).

Background:

Washington has 11 deep draft ports, of which seven are on Puget Sound. Washington handles 7 percent of the United States exports and 6 percent of the United States imports. The majority of the freight arrives and departs using either commercial trucks and/or rail facilities. Based on the 2004 Marine Cargo Forecast, the total Puget Sound container trade is up 241 percent since 1982. Most cargo currently comes in boxes. The seaports measure the amount of freight coming across their terminals in TEUs, which stands for "20 foot equivalent units". The majority of the containers that you use for shipping are actually 40 foot containers, so each one is measured as two TEUs. It is estimated that in calendar year 2008, there will be approximately 4.2 million 20 foot equivalent unit cargo containers. For calendar years 2008 through 2010, the growth rate for containers would be 4.1 percent and 3.9 percent for 2011 through 2013.

Summary of Bill:

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 Joint Transportation Committee is directed to study container fees, port-related user fees, and other funding mechanisms as a means to fund freight infrastructure improvements. The findings and recommendations of the study must be submitted to the transportation committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2007. The study is subject to appropriation.

The Freight Congestion Relief Account is created in the State Treasury and will receive 100 percent of its interest earnings. Any money in the account can only be spent after appropriation and must be used to provide congestion relief through the improvement of freight rail systems and state highways that function as freight corridors.

Future funding must, at a minimum, include funding for the following projects: SR 519 and associated access to the Port of Seattle; SR 509 connection to I-5 bypassing SeaTac Airport; SR 167 Port of Tacoma access to I-5, and SR 167 new alignment in Pierce County; I-90 Snoqualmie Pass; grade separations in the East Spokane Valley; increased capacity of Stampede Pass rail corridor; and other bottlenecks and choke points along mainline rail routes.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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