
Transportation Committee

HB 2941

Brief Description: Authorizing the use of express toll lanes in the Interstate 405 corridor.

Sponsors: Representatives Clibborn, O'Brien, Maxwell, Lias, Eddy, Springer, Hunter and Goodman.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes the imposition of tolls for, and the construction and operation of, express toll lanes on Interstate 405 between the junction with Interstate 5 on the north end and Northeast 6th Street in Bellevue on the south end.
- Requires the state tolling authority, the Washington State Transportation Commission, to set toll rates for vehicles with less than three passengers, which can vary by time of day, level of congestion, vehicle occupancy, and other criteria.
- Requires the Washington State Department of Transportation to conduct a traffic and revenue analysis and develop a finance plan for a 40-mile continuous express toll lane system that includes State Route 167 and Interstate 405.

Hearing Date: 1/25/10

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes are highway lanes reserved part-time or full-time for vehicles carrying a minimum number of occupants. The object of these lanes is to facilitate the operation of transit vehicles and other multi-occupant vehicles, allowing them to avoid congestion and providing those vehicles with improved travel times. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has authority to designate HOV lanes on state highways, and there are currently over 200 miles of HOV lanes in operation in the central Puget Sound area. During certain periods, HOV lanes are operating below capacity while adjacent general purpose lanes are congested.

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.

High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes are lanes that are open to carpools, vanpools, transit vehicles, and toll-paying vehicles. The goal for establishing these lanes is to provide a higher level of service for multi-occupant vehicles, while permitting other vehicles to use surplus capacity in the lane by paying a toll.

The WSDOT is currently operating a HOT lane pilot project along the nine miles of HOV lanes on State Route 167 (SR 167) within King County. Tolls on the project are established by the state tolling authority, the Washington State Transportation Commission (Transportation Commission), and vary in amount by time of day and the level of traffic congestion. During peak hours, the tolls must be adjusted to maintain HOT lane performance of at least 45 miles per hour for at least 90 percent of the time.

In 2009 the WSDOT was directed, in Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5352, to conduct a traffic revenue study for Interstate 405 (I-405) in King and Snohomish counties that included funding for improvements and HOT lanes. The WSDOT was also directed to develop a plan to operate two HOT lanes in each direction on I-405.

Summary of Bill:

The imposition of tolls is authorized for express toll lanes on I-405 between the junction with Interstate 5 on the north end and Northeast 6th Street in Bellevue on the south end. The state tolling authority, the Transportation Commission, is directed to set the schedule of toll rates for these express toll lanes, which can vary by time of day, level of congestion, vehicle occupancy, and other criteria determined by the tolling authority.

The WSDOT is authorized to construct and operate the express toll lanes and set the performance standards for the project. The WSDOT is required to adjust the toll rate to insure that vehicles with one or two passengers are allowed to enter the express toll lanes only to the extent that average speeds in the lanes remain above 45 miles per hour 90 percent of the time during peak hours.

The WSDOT is required to conduct a traffic and revenue analysis of a 40-mile continuous express toll lane system that includes SR 167 and I-405. The WSDOT is directed to use the information from this analysis to develop a financing plan to fund improvements in the corridor, and is required to present both the traffic and revenue analysis and the finance plan to the Governor and the Legislature by January 2011.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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