

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6012

As of February 25, 2009

Title: An act relating to the amount of funds granted or loaned by the department of transportation for airports owned or controlled by municipalities or federally recognized Indian tribes.

Brief Description: Increasing the maximum amount of financial assistance that may be granted or loaned by the department of transportation for airports owned or controlled by municipalities or federally recognized Indian tribes.

Sponsors: Senators Sheldon, Swecker, Eide, Kilmer, King, Jarrett and Haugen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/24/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Wendy Malkin (786-7434)

Background: The Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Aviation administers a Local Airport Aid Grant Program that aids 138 publicly-owned airports in the areas of maintenance, preservation, safety, and improvement. Any municipality or federally-recognized tribe that owns an airport that is open and available for public use is eligible to receive the grants.

In its second round of grants during the 2007-2009 biennium, WSDOT Aviation awarded over \$1.1 million to 34 airports for 56 different projects. WSDOT awards 2-3 rounds of grants each biennium.

Generally, 34 percent of state grant funds are distributed as a 2.5 percent state match to federally-funded airports. The remainder of the funds are distributed to airports that are not eligible for federal funds.

Under current law, the maximum amount WSDOT Aviation can award to any one project is \$250,000. Over the last three biennia, WSDOT Aviation awarded seven grants at the maximum \$250,000 funding level. WSDOT requires a minimum local match of 5 percent. Local matches can be in cash or in-kind volunteer labor and materials.

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.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute): The maximum amount WSDOT Aviation can award or loan to any one project is increased from \$250,000 to \$500,000.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 16, 2009.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The cap on grants for airports has not been increased for about 30 years. Costs of repair and construction work have increased significantly. Increasing the cap does not increase the total amount WSDOT has available for grants, but it gives WSDOT flexibility. A higher grant limit will allow smaller airports to complete paving projects in a single grant, which would lead to efficiencies in the way grants are done. WSDOT has a record of good judgment in the amounts of its grant awards. It is very unlikely that the agency would regularly give out two large grants rather than dividing the money among many projects.

Persons Testifying: PRO: David Ketchum, State Community Airport Association; Eric Johnson, WSDOT Aviation.