
Transportation Committee

ESB 5205

Brief Description: Concerning high capacity transportation system plan components and review.

Sponsors: Senators Kilmer, Sheldon, Rockefeller and White.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Limits the required planning process and expert review panel requirement for high capacity transportation systems to systems that include a fixed rail guideway or propose to convert or appropriate existing highway capacity.

Hearing Date: 3/9/11

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

In the central Puget Sound region, high capacity transportation (HCT) systems may be established and financed by a regional transit authority (Sound Transit). Outside of the central Puget Sound region, HCT systems may be established by certain transit agencies only in Clark, Spokane, Thurston, Whatcom, and Yakima counties.

High capacity transportation service means a system of public transportation services within an urbanized region operating principally on exclusive rights of way, and the supporting services and facilities necessary to implement the system, including interim express services and high occupancy vehicle lanes, which, taken as a whole, provides a substantially higher level of passenger capacity, speed, and service frequency than traditional public transportation systems operating principally in general purpose roadways.

Transit agencies authorized to provide HCT service may seek to finance the system and service with the following voter-approved revenue measures:

- an employer tax of up to \$2 per month per employee;

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- rental car sales and use tax not to exceed 2.172 percent; and
- sales and use tax not to exceed 0.9 percent.

To assure development of an effective HCT system, the local authority must establish a system and financing plan, and must provide for public involvement. In addition, an expert review panel must be appointed to provide independent technical review for development of any plan which is to be funded in whole or part by HCT voter-approved taxes. The state's role in HCT planning is to facilitate cooperative state and local planning efforts, and to provide system and project planning review and monitoring in cooperation with the expert review panel.

In general, most transit agencies, like public transportation benefit areas and county transportation authorities, are authorized to impose a sales and use tax of up to 0.9 percent with voter approval for the purpose of funding public transportation services.

Summary of Bill:

The planning process required of local authorities seeking to implement a high capacity transportation system is limited to systems where the plan includes a rail fixed guideway component or proposes to convert or appropriate existing highway capacity, as is the requirement that an expert review panel be appointed to provide independent technical review of the plan.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 8, 2011.

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