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**SENATE BILL 6506**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2016 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Chase, Darneille, and Hasegawa

AN ACT Relating to fostering economic resilience and development and improving the passenger and freight transportation system in Washington state by supporting the rail industry and the use of railroads for passengers and freight; adding a new section to chapter 47.04 RCW; adding new sections to chapter 43.131 RCW; creating a new section; and providing an effective date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature recognizes the important role of the rail industry in creating and sustaining economic opportunities in Washington state. The economic vitality of Washington state requires a strong rail system capable of providing its businesses, ports, and farms with competitive access to North American and international markets. In looking to the state's future, the legislature finds that supporting the rail industry is critical to building and sustaining a diverse and resilient economy in Washington state.

(2) The Pacific Northwest rail corridor is one of eleven federally designated passenger rail corridors, spanning three hundred miles in Washington state. Amtrak Cascades train service has been providing passenger rail service since 1994 in this corridor, operating over four thousand trains annually with stops in eighteen cities.

(3) The rail industry and railroad transportation is interconnected with public infrastructure, including roads, multimodal hubs, ports, energy facilities, and water-sewer facilities. The legislature finds that maintaining and improving these connections with public facilities is beneficial to the public and will strengthen the economic position of Washington state.

(4) To that end, the legislature intends to engage in a collaborative process with state agencies, local governments, railroads, passenger rail associations, and other rail stakeholders to evaluate whether changes in state and local policies are necessary to foster resilience and growth in the use of rail for passenger and freight transportation. Through the establishment of the legislative task force for rail transportation, the legislature intends to take action to support and sustain the efficient movement of people and commodities to market.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 47.04 RCW to read as follows:

(1)(a) A legislative task force for rail transportation in Washington state is established, with members as provided in this subsection.

(i) The speaker of the house of representatives must appoint two members from each of the two largest caucuses of the house of representatives.

(ii) The president of the senate must appoint two members from each of the two largest caucuses of the senate.

(iii) The governor must appoint one member to represent the department of commerce and one member to represent the department of transportation.

(b) The legislative members of the task force must select cochairs from among the membership, one from the house of representatives and one from the senate but each from a different caucus from the two largest caucuses in the house of representatives and the senate.

(2)(a) The task force must develop recommendations that achieve the following objectives:

(i) Identify opportunities for improving existing state programs that invest in rail infrastructure and operations;

(ii) Identify key rail investments that will bring the most cost-effective improvements to the rail system;

(iii) Identify the barriers to maintaining and expanding shipping by rail;

(iv) Identify the barriers to maintaining and expanding passenger rail;

(v) Promote regulatory consistency and certainty in the areas of transportation planning, land use permitting, and business development in a manner that supports the rail industry;

(vi) Encourage cooperation and partnerships between local, state, federal, and private sectors to foster increased use of the rail system and economic growth; and

(vii) Identify aspects of state policy that have an impact on the rail industry.

(b) The recommendations of the task force must include a short and long-term action plan for the legislature to support and sustain the rail industry and passenger rail. The recommendations of the task force may also include specific legislative approaches, such as changes to state law, and nonlegislative approaches, such as action plans for state agencies and local governments.

(3)(a) The task force must consult with local governments, industry representatives, and state agencies, which must include, but are not limited to: The department of commerce, the department of transportation, the office of regulatory assistance, and the utilities and transportation commission.

(b) The legislative cochairs must appoint an advisory committee consisting of members that represent, but are not limited to, the following areas: Short line, class II, and class I railroad companies; manufacturing and agriculture; shippers; local industrial councils; passenger rail; and chambers of commerce.

(4) The task force must submit to the governor and the appropriate committees of the legislature a work plan by December 1, 2016, and an annual report each December 1st thereafter with the task force's findings and recommendations.

(5) Staff support for the task force must be provided by the joint transportation committee.

(6) Legislative members of the task force must be reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120. Nonlegislative members are not entitled to be reimbursed for travel expenses if they are elected officials or are participating on behalf of an employer, governmental entity, or other organization. Any reimbursement for other nonlegislative members is subject to chapter 43.03 RCW.

(7) The expenses of the task force must be paid jointly by the senate and the house of representatives. Task force expenditures are subject to approval by the senate facilities and operations committee and the house of representatives executive rules committee, or their successor committees.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.131 RCW to read as follows:

The legislative task force for rail transportation in Washington state established under section 2 of this act terminates June 1, 2021.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.131 RCW to read as follows:

The following acts or parts of acts, as now existing or hereafter amended, are each repealed, effective June 1, 2022:

(1) Section 1 of this act; and

(2) Section 2 of this act.

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