

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6078

As Passed House - Amended:

March 1, 1996

Title: An act relating to the public presentation of information regarding regional transit authority projects.

Brief Description: Representing regional transit authority projects.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Heavey, Prince and Owen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/26/96 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 3/1/96, 66-27.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 24 members: Representatives K. Schmidt, Chairman; Mitchell, Vice Chairman; Skinner, Vice Chairman; R. Fisher, Ranking Minority Member; Hatfield, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Backlund; Blanton; Buck; Cairnes; Chopp; Elliot; Hankins; Horn; Johnson; McMahan; Ogden; Patterson; Quall; Robertson; Romero; D. Schmidt; Scott; Sterk and Tokuda.

Staff: Gene Baxstrom (786-7303).

Background: A regional transit authority in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties and transit agencies in Clark, Kitsap, Spokane, Thurston, and Yakima counties are authorized to impose voter-approved taxes to develop a high capacity transportation system.

There are numerous preconditions which must be met before these agencies can put a high capacity plan and funding plan on the ballot, including publication of a brochure for distribution to all registered voters describing the system and its relationship to regional issues, such as land use. In addition, these agencies are also required to publish a voters' pamphlet similar to what is done for general elections. The brochure prepared by the Regional Transit Authority for the March 1995 election was viewed by many as a promotional piece published with public funds.

The Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority assumed \$2 billion in federal and state funds as part of its funding plan for voter approval. At that time only about \$300 million in federal funds had been authorized for such a project.

Summary of Bill: A regional transit authority or transit agency submitting high capacity transportation funding plans for voter approval is no longer required to publish and distribute a brochure describing the proposal.

In developing financial plans for high capacity transportation projects, agencies are prohibited from assuming or implying the availability of state funds unless those funds are specifically authorized. The same prohibition applies in the case of federal funds, unless those funds are based on authorizations in the current six-year transportation authorization law and appropriations based on that authorization.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Repeal of the requirement for a brochure to describe the proposal reduces costs. Retention of the voters' pamphlet insures voter knowledge of any proposal. A more accurate depiction of the availability of federal and state funds better informs voters.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Mike Heavey, prime sponsor; and Jim Metcalf, Regional Transit Authority.