

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESB 6776

As Passed Senate, February 29, 1996

Title: An act relating to emergency grants to flood-damaged short-line or light-density railroads.

Brief Description: Authorizing emergency grants to flood-damaged short-line or light-density railroads.

Sponsors: Senators Owen and Prince.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/21/96, 2/26/96 [DPA].
Passed Senate, 2/29/96, 45-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Owen, Chair; Morton, Oke, Prentice, Prince, Rasmussen, Schow, Thibaudeau and Wood.

Staff: Jeff Doyle (786-7322)

Background: In 1995, the Legislature merged the essential rail banking account with the essential rail assistance account (ERAA). Use of moneys in the account were further restricted. One such restriction is that privately-owned railroads may not receive grants from the ERAA (although they may qualify for loans).

Summary of Bill: Privately-owned short-line or light density railroads may receive state grants from the essential rail assistance account, but only for the purpose of repairing damage caused by recent flooding. This emergency exception to the Legislature's policy of providing strictly loans expires on December 31, 1998, or sooner upon repair of flood damage.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: This one-time emergency relief will enable shortline railroads to be repaired in time for the coming asparagus harvest in April. It will also enable grain to continue to be moved on the Blue Mountain railroad.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Pat Jones, WA Public Ports and Port of Walla Walla; Dennis Hamblet, WSDOT.