

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 6461

As Passed Senate, February 17, 1997

Title: An act relating to creating partnerships for strategic freight investments.

Brief Description: Creating partnerships for strategic freight investments.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Prince, Haugen, Wood, Winsley, Heavey, Loveland, Snyder, Kohl, Jacobsen, Patterson, Prentice, Thibaudeau, Franklin, Spanel, McAuliffe, Goings, Fraser, Schow and Rasmussen; by request of Governor Locke).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/9/98, 2/10/98 [DPS, DNP].
Passed Senate, 2/17/98, 42-6.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6461 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prince, Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Goings, Haugen, Horn, Morton, Newhouse, Prentice, Rasmussen and Sellar.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Benton, Vice Chair; Heavey and Jacobsen.

Staff: Jeff Doyle (786-7322)

Background: During the 1996 interim, the Legislative Transportation Committee (LTC) appointed the Freight Mobility Advisory Committee (FMAC) to analyze the state's freight mobility needs, identify high-priority freight transportation projects, and make policy recommendations to the Legislature.

One of the key recommendations from FMAC was that the state take the lead in establishing a freight transportation program that would forge funding partnerships between the state, counties, cities, ports and private industry for transportation improvements along strategic freight corridors.

This past interim the Freight Mobility Project Prioritization Committee (FMPPC) was established to further develop state policies to enhance the freight transportation system. This committee consisted of representatives from cities, counties, ports, railroads, trucking and the state Department of Transportation (DOT). The FMPPC recommended specific criteria for use in ranking freight mobility projects. The committee also analyzed proposed freight projects and applied the priority criteria, which yielded the freight mobility project list.

Summary of Bill: A freight mobility strategic investment program is created for the purpose of reviewing, evaluating and recommending funding for freight transportation projects that are of strategic importance to the state.

The Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB) oversees administration of this program. The board is comprised of representatives from the cities, counties, ports, railroads, trucking, and DOT. FMSIB is authorized to hire one professional administrator. Other staff support is provided by the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB), County Road Administration Board (CRAB), and DOT as needs arise. The board is required to develop a long-term staffing plan and submit that plan to the Office of Financial Management (OFM) and the Legislature for review and approval.

Minimum project eligibility criteria are specified in statute, and project priority criteria are incorporated from the recommendations of FMPPC. After administering the program for a full biennium, FMSIB must adjust the criteria as necessary to ensure that the program meets legislative intent.

After evaluating all proposed freight mobility projects, FMSIB selects the top ranking projects and submits them as a "project portfolio" to OFM and the Legislature for funding consideration. The board is directed to leverage at least 20 percent of project costs from partnership funds. "Partnership funding" means non-state funding, except that TIB and CRAB funds may be considered as partnership funding, and from all other sources, including donations of rights of way and other tangible assets. The board must ensure that no project is more appropriately funded by another fund source or program. The projects selected for the portfolio must primarily benefit the movement of freight.

In allocating funds for the program, FMSIB must allocate the first 55 percent of funds to the highest ranking projects, regardless of location. The remaining funds are allocated evenly among three regions of the state: eastern region, Puget Sound region and western region. If a project in the portfolio is not ready to proceed at the time the Legislature is making its funding decisions, that project is removed and the next highest rated project takes its place. The removed project retains its position in the priority ranking so as to be eligible for funding during the next funding cycle.

In addition to its other responsibilities, FMSIB is directed to review and make recommendations concerning the operational inefficiencies affecting freight mobility, including policies that reduce congestion in truck lanes at border crossings and weigh stations.

DOT is directed to make incentive grants to regional transportation planning agencies that share a border with Canada for the purpose of conducting joint transportation planning activities. The new federal surface transportation act reauthorization bill is expected to provide the funds for these grants. This would enable Washington State to take advantage of federal funding opportunities.

Port districts are required to submit their development plans to cities, counties and regional transportation planning organizations to enhance joint planning for freight transportation solutions.

The FMSIB and program are scheduled to sunset on June 30, 2003.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The state is in need of a statewide freight mobility program that can target state investments to leverage the best solution for the dollars spent.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Pat Jones, WA Public Ports Association; Jennifer Joly, Governor's Office; George Tyler.