

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6639

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 4, 1998

Title: An act relating to establishing a pilot project for noxious weed control in state highway rights of way.

Brief Description: Establishing a pilot project for noxious weed control.

Sponsors: Senators Morton and Swecker.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/3/98, 2/4/98 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6639 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prince, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Goings, Haugen, Heavey, Horn, Jacobsen, Morton, Oke, Patterson, Prentice and Rasmussen.

Staff: Ashley Probart (786-7319)

Background: State law requires all state agencies to control noxious weeds on lands they own. Noxious weed control on highway corridors is important because new invaders often appear first on roadsides and a highway's linear nature can impact several property owners. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has as a first priority to control class A, B, and county listed noxious weeds to a level that is acceptable to county weed boards and districts. Infestations of new weed invaders, and established weed populations where adjacent neighbors are making an effort to comply with noxious weed regulations are the highest priority for weed control. There is a concern, however, by local noxious weed control boards and adjacent property owners, that WSDOT's current noxious weed control practices do not fully manage the right of way.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Legislature finds that the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is responsible for noxious weed control in the full width of the right of way. In addition, an effective noxious weed control program for state highway right of way requires close cooperation with local noxious weed control boards.

A pilot project must be implemented during the upcoming weed control season in WSDOT's North Central Region, maintenance area three. Noxious weed control boards are required to identify specific control priorities, geographic areas, specific species, recommended control methods, and timing of the work. Once the priorities are identified, they are to be submitted to WSDOT. WSDOT is then required to identify a budget, control methods, timing, communication and protocol with the weed board, and identify possible options for contracting portions of the work. Both WSDOT and the local weed boards must then

prepare a plan governing noxious weed control activities beginning May 1, 1998 through the end of the control season.

WSDOT must report back to the Legislative Transportation Committee on the results of the pilot project. The report must be reviewed and approved by the participating noxious weed control boards before being submitted to the Legislature.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Ferry County in Washington State Department of Transportation, Eastern Region, maintenance area four is removed from the pilot project. An emergency clause is added.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 5, 1998.

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

Testimony For: This bill will lead to better coordination and communication between noxious weed boards and the Department of Transportation. The long term results would lead to noxious weed control within the full width of the state right of way.

Testimony Against: Current Department of Transportation weed control practices are effective where applied. Unsuccessful noxious weed control is largely due to limited Department of Transportation resources.

Testified: Senator Morton, prime sponsor (pro); Karla Fullerton, WA Cattlemen's Association (pro); Randy Lorrello, WA Federation of State Employees (con); Terry Adams, WA Federation of State Employees (con); Larry Rus, Washington State Department of Transportation (neutral).