

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5830

As of February 23, 1999

Title: An act relating to transportation congestion relief.

Brief Description: Relieving transportation congestion.

Sponsors: Senators T. Sheldon and Haugen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/23/99.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Brad Lovaas (786-7307)

Background: The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, TEA-21, represents the current federal surface transportation act, which is essentially a plan for federal funding for the next six years. Its predecessor was the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA).

One of the new programs created under ISTEA was the Surface Transportation Program (STP). The STP is the most flexible of all federal-aid programs, allowing use for a wide array of transportation programs. The TEA-21 STP funds are distributed according to federal direction: 10 percent for safety improvements including highway-railway crossings programs and hazard elimination; 10 percent for transportation enhancement activities; 50 percent to urban areas based upon population; and 30 percent may be obligated to any area of the state. Additionally, states also receive minimum guarantee flexible funds which can be expended on the same types of projects as STP funds. There are no federal requirements placed on the distribution of minimum guarantee flexible funds; they may be obligated in any area of the state. The 30 percent of STP funds noted above, plus the minimum guarantee flexible funds are together referred to as "STP, statewide flexible funds."

Project Selection. The Washington State Department of Transportation uses a statutorily prescribed highway project selection process contained within Chapter 47.05 RCW. The priority programming statute prescribes that the WSDOT highway construction program consist of two programs: the Preservation Program and the Improvement Program.

Priority programming for the Improvement Program shall take into account the following: support for the state's economy; cost effective movement of people and goods; accident and accident risk reduction; protection of the state's natural environment; continuity and systematic development of the network; consistency with local comprehensive plans; consistency with regional transportation plans; public views; feasibility of financing the full proposed improvement; commitments from previous legislative sessions; and the relative costs and benefits of candidate projects.

Within the Improvement Program there exists four subprograms. The mobility subprogram is where general highway capacity solutions are contained. These include High Occupancy Vehicle lanes and general urban, rural or bicycle capacity additions to the state highway system. An amount of up to 22 percent of the available STP statewide flexible funds is authorized for this program.

Summary of Bill: Rural Transportation Projects. The Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) is authorized to provide grants for transportation improvements in: distressed counties; rural natural resources impact area; and designated community empowerment zones. Funding is provided from the federal-aid surface transportation program (STP) funds authorized under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. An amount of up to 22 percent of the available STP funds is authorized for this program.

Congestion Relief Account. One cent of the current 23 cents is distributed into a congestion relief account. This revenue stream is bonded to provide bond proceeds for the design, right of way, and construction of designated congestion relief corridors.

Corridor Program. Corridors designated for funding from the Congestion Relief Account are:

- 1) State Route number 18, †80 to interstate 90;
- 2) State Route number 509, Interstate 5 to south †88
- 3) State Route number 395, North Spokane freeway;
- 4) State Route number 522, State Route 9 to State Route number 2;
- 5) State Route number 525, Interstate 5 to Paine Field Boulevard;
- 6) State Route number 539, Horton to International boundary.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 17, 1999.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except for Section 3, which takes effect July 1, 1999, and Section 6, which takes effect September 1, 2000.