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## Transportation Committee

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### HB 2359

**Brief Description:** Authorizing the financing of regional transportation planning improvements by counties.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Fisher, Cooper, Kessler, Berkey, Jackley, McIntire, Conway, Wood, Kagi and Ogden.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes counties to address regional transportation issues by developing a plan to improve state highways, regional arterials, public transportation, ferries, rail lines, and management transportation demand.
- Authorizes voter-approved funding sources, including newly authorized 0.5 percent sales tax, \$100 vehicle registration fee, parking tax, and tolls. Extends to counties for this plan existing tax sources available to counties for HOVs, local fuel tax, and transit and high capacity transit taxes, with transit agency approval.

**Hearing Date:** 1/23/02

**Staff:** Gene Baxstrom (786-7303).

#### Background:

The Governor and the Legislature created the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation (BRCT) in 1998 to assess the local, regional and state transportation systems; ensure that current and future money is spent wisely; make the system more accountable and predictable; and prepare a 20-year plan for funding and investing in the transportation system. In its final report the BRCT issued 18 recommendations. Recommendation 6 states that regions be provided with the ability to plan, select, fund and implement (or contract for the implementation of) projects identified to meet the region's transportation and land use goals.

#### Summary of Bill:

County powers are enhanced to enable counties to address major transportation issues within their boundaries and within regions. These powers include newly authorized, voter-approved revenue sources as well as modifications of currently authorized taxes. A Regional

Transportation Investment Plan development process is prescribed, utilizing regional transportation planning organizations.

**Development of a Regional Transportation Investment Plan.** At the request of a member county (or counties), a regional transportation planning organization is to prepare within 90 days an investment plan for counties addressing identified criteria, including reduced congestion and improved safety, increased capacity, air quality, land use, and cost-effectiveness to address mobility needs within the county (counties). The plan is to identify projects to be included, project costs and contingencies, revenue sources, and a financing plan. The Department of Transportation is to provide assistance in this planning effort.

The county legislative authority can either approve the plan or revise it. A majority of cities in the county, representing a majority of the cities' population, may then disapprove the plan. The plan then goes to the ballot to be approved or disapproved by the voters within each county. If the plan is approved by the voters and involves more than one county, the counties must then negotiate interlocal agreements. A process is set forth to deal with projects which are over cost by more than 20 percent. The county may terminate taxes and tolls under the approved plan when projects and project debts are paid.

The plan may include projects to enhance highways of statewide significance, principal arterials of regional significance, public transportation investments, rail facilities, ferry system capital improvements, and transportation demand management programs. Projects may include operation, maintenance and preservation of these roadways and other facilities.

**Revenue Options.** A regional transportation planning organization and a county may select from the following list of revenue options to fund the projects: a vehicle license fee of up to \$100 per year; a commercial parking tax on gross proceeds or vehicle stalls; sales and use tax of up to 0.5 percent; and tolls on new improvements. In addition, the following local government funding sources may be used for these projects: a local option motor vehicle excise tax of up to 0.3 percent and an employer excise tax of up to \$2 per employee per month for HOV lane development; a local option fuel tax limited to road purposes; with approval of the transit agency, the unused sales tax for transit for transit purposes; and, with approval of the affected transit agency, high capacity transit sales tax and motor vehicle excise tax (MVET) for high capacity transit uses. The local option taxes may only be imposed to the extent those taxes are not already imposed.

Sales tax paid on construction materials to build the improvements authorized under this bill are credited to the project to defray costs, pay debt service or to lower or reduce the time for the tolls. Cities within counties not imposing it are authorized to impose the up-to-\$15 vehicle registration fee. All counties with transit systems are authorized to impose the high capacity transit taxes as part of a regional plan.

**Other features:**

State Route 509 is designated as a state highway of statewide significance.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void if a transportation revenue act is not passed in 2002.