

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5477

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 22, 2001

Title: An act relating to public transportation systems.

Brief Description: Adjusting the relationship between a public transportation benefit area and a city.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, Long, Shin, McAuliffe, Swecker, Horn and Costa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/6/01, 2/22/01 [DPS, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5477 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Gardner, Vice Chair; Benton, Eide, Horn, Jacobsen, McDonald, Oke, Prentice, Shin and Swecker.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Kastama and McAuliffe.

Staff: Jennifer Ziegler (786-7316)

Background: In 1975, the Legislature created Public Transportation Benefit Areas (PTBA's), allowing cities and unincorporated areas to jointly create and operate transit systems. There are 26 PTBA's in the state and each one collects a portion of the sales tax to pay for operations. Cities with their own transit systems are allowed to operate those systems without becoming part of the PTBA or sharing revenues with the PTBA. In some cases there may be an overlap in the service provided by the city and the service provided by the PTBA.

Summary of Substitute Bill: In a county with a population of more than 150,000, where a PTBA and a city both operate a public transportation system, the county must submit a ballot proposition to the city on whether the PTBA should acquire the city's transit system. The vote must occur before January 1, 2002.

If the ballot proposition fails, the city must pay the PTBA for the average subsidy per passenger for each trip made by the residents of the city on the PTBA system and a portion of the PTBA's depreciation costs.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Only the city must vote in the election regarding whether to consolidate the two transit systems. If the ballot proposition passes, the PTBA

must pay the city for the fair market value of its assets. This legislation only applies in counties with populations of more than 150,000 people.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 30, 2001.

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

Testimony For: It is important to examine the overall cost of transportation services. This legislation would result in a better overall transit system for Snohomish County residents. Two bus companies providing duplicative services wastes money. In some cases, a Community Transit and an Everett Transit bus are going the same way on the same road. Citizens just want the most efficient transit system; consolidation of the two systems will provide an efficient system.

Testimony Against: Everett drivers are paid more than Community Transit bus drivers. There must be specific language in the bill protecting labor. This bill provides for a hostile take over of Everett Transit. A joint operating agency is a more effective way to address concerns regarding duplicative service. This is a local problem and should be addressed at the local level. There are current statutory provisions regarding annexation that could address legislative concerns. The national trend is not toward consolidation of services because individual cities feel frustrated that their needs are not met by a large board. Disabled citizens who are dependent on transit need a responsive entity. Community Transit is not as responsive or willing to listen to concerns.

Testified: PRO: Senator Haugen, prime sponsor; Ben Porter, Porter and Associates; David Weiser, City of Marysville; Rob Morrison; Robert Farmer; CON: Dan Linville, Amalgamated Transit Union; Chris Reiter, AUT 1576; Ed Hansen, City of Everett; Gerald Walker, Nelson Nygaard; Patti Barton; Kelvin Barton.