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## Transportation Committee

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### HB 2676

**Brief Description:** Concerning the Interstate 5 Columbia river crossing project.

**Sponsors:** Representative Moeller; by request of Department of Transportation.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes the tolling of the existing and replacement Interstate 5 Columbia River bridges.
- Designates the Columbia River Crossing Project as an eligible toll facility and defines the parameters of the project area.
- Authorizes the Washington State Transportation Commission to enter into agreements with the Oregon State Transportation Commission regarding the mutual or joint setting, adjustment, and review of toll rates.
- Requires certification by the Secretary of the Washington State Department of Transportation, in order for the act to go into effect, that: (1) sufficient funding authority to initiate construction has been received; and (2) the Washington State Transportation Commission has entered into agreements with the Oregon State Transportation Commission regarding toll setting.

**Hearing Date:** 2/6/12

**Staff:** David Munnecke (786-7315).

#### Background:

The Legislature is the only entity with the authority to authorize tolls on an eligible toll facility. An eligible toll facility is defined as portions of the state highway system specifically identified by the Legislature, including transportation corridors, bridges, crossings, interchanges, on-ramps, off-ramps, approaches, bi-state facilities, and interconnections between highways. The Legislature has authorized collection of tolls on the following facilities:

- the Tacoma Narrows Bridge;

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- the State Route (SR) 520 floating bridge;
- the SR 167 high-occupancy toll lanes; and
- the Interstate 405 express toll lanes.

The Legislature has designated the Washington State Transportation Commission (Commission) as the state tolling authority with responsibility for setting toll rates, including variable pricing, and reviewing toll operations. Prior to the convening of each regular session of the Legislature, the Commission must report to the transportation committees of the Legislature on any increase or decrease in toll rates approved by the Commission.

The Interstate 5 (I-5) Bridge crosses the Columbia River and connects Vancouver, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, with two identical bridge structures. One bridge structure carries traffic northbound to Vancouver, and the other bridge structure carries traffic southbound to Portland. The northbound bridge was built in 1917, and the southbound bridge was built in 1958. The Columbia River Crossing (CRC) Project, as described in the record of decision, will replace the I-5 bridges, extend light rail to Vancouver, improve closely-spaced interchanges, and enhance the pedestrian and bicycle paths. The estimated project costs range from \$3.1 billion to \$3.5 billion.

### **Summary of Bill:**

The CRC Project is defined as a bi-state, multimodal corridor improvement program between the SR 500 interchange in Vancouver, Washington, and the Victory Boulevard interchange in Portland, Oregon.

The CRC Project is designated as an eligible toll facility. Tolls are authorized to be charged for travel on the existing and replacement I-5 Columbia River bridges. The tolling authority is authorized to enter into agreements with the Oregon State Transportation Commission regarding the mutual or joint setting, adjustment, and review of toll rates as the tolling authority may find necessary or convenient to carry out the purposes of this section.

Toll revenue generated on the CRC Project must only be expended to construct, improve, preserve, maintain, manage, or operate the CRC Project. Expenditures of toll revenues are subject to appropriation and must be made only: (1) to cover the operating costs of the eligible toll facility, including necessary maintenance, preservation, administration, and toll enforcement by public law enforcement within the boundaries of the facility; (2) to meet obligations for the repayment of debt and interest on the eligible toll facility, and any other associated financing costs including, but not limited to, required reserves and insurance; (3) to meet any other obligations to provide funding contributions for any projects or operations on the eligible toll facility; (4) to provide for the operations of conveyances of people or goods; or (5) for any other improvements to the eligible toll facility.

The act takes effect upon, and tolls may not be collected on the project until, certification of the Secretary of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to the Governor that: (1) the WSDOT has received sufficient funding authority to initiate construction of the CRC Project; and (2) the Commission has executed an agreement with the Oregon Transportation Commission regarding the mutual or joint setting, adjustment, and review of toll rates. If the Secretary does not provide such certification to the Governor by December 31, 2015, the act is null and void.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** See summary above.