

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5403

As Passed Senate, March 7, 2017

Title: An act relating to ferry district authority.

Brief Description: Concerning ferry district authority.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators O'Ban and Conway).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/20/17, 2/21/17 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed Senate: 3/07/17, 44-5.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Allows a county ferry district to construct, purchase, operate, and maintain any type of ferry.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5403 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators King, Chair; Sheldon, Vice Chair; Hobbs, Ranking Minority Member; Liias, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cleveland, Ericksen, Fortunato, Hawkins, O'Ban, Saldaña, Takko, Van De Wege, Walsh and Wilson.

Staff: Hayley Gamble (786-7452)

Background: Counties are authorized to construct, purchase, operate, and maintain ferry systems under the direction and control of the county legislative authority. In lieu of the county operating and maintaining a ferry system, the county legislative authority may adopt an ordinance creating a county ferry district (district) in all or a portion of the area of the county. The ordinance may be adopted only after a public hearing has been held, and the county makes a finding that it is in the public interest to create the district. The members of the county legislative authority compose the governing body of any district created in their county.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

A district may construct, purchase, operate, and maintain passenger-only ferries. A ferry district may provide services for free or may charge a toll. A district is considered an independent taxing authority and may levy an ad valorem tax on all taxable property located within the district not to exceed \$0.75 per \$1,000 of assessed value, except that a district located in a county with a population of 1.5 million or more may not levy at a rate that exceeds \$0.075 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. Revenue from the tax may only be used for providing ferry services; operating, maintaining and improving vessels and dock facilities; providing shuttle services; landside improvements directly related to passenger-only ferry services; and related personnel costs. A district may incur general indebtedness and issue general obligation bonds for passenger-only ferries and associated terminals.

In 2006, Engrossed Senate Substitute Bill 6787 made a series of changes to the district statutes. These changes included allowing any county to form such a district and removed some references to passenger-only ferry service. Three references to passenger-only ferry service remains in the district statutes.

Summary of First Substitute Bill: A county ferry district is allowed to construct, purchase, operate, and maintain any type of ferry, as well as the necessary landings. A district may incur debt and issue bonds to construct, purchase, and preserve any type of ferries and terminals. The taxes levied by a district may also be used for landside improvements related to the provision of any kind of ferry service.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on First Substitute: PRO: This bill came from Pierce County, which operates an auto as well as passenger-only ferry service. Pierce County would like to use this statute and a recent study that recommended instituting a county ferry district in Pierce County.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Tiffany Speir, Pierce County.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.