

Chapter 36.57 RCW
COUNTY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

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Municipality defined for purposes of RCW 36.57.080, 36.57.100, and 36.57.110: RCW 35.58.272.

RCW 36.57.010 Definitions. For the purposes of this chapter the following definitions shall apply:

(1) "Authority" means the county transportation authority created pursuant to this chapter.

(2) "Population" means the number of residents as shown by the figures released for the most recent official state, federal, or county census, or population determination made by the office of financial management.

(3) "Public transportation function" means the transportation of passengers and their incidental baggage by means other than by chartered bus, sightseeing bus, together with the necessary passenger terminals and parking facilities or other properties necessary for passenger and vehicular access to and from such people-moving systems, and may include contracting for the provision of ambulance services for the transportation of the sick and injured: PROVIDED, That such contracting for ambulance services shall not include the exercise of eminent domain powers: PROVIDED, FURTHER, That nothing shall prohibit an authority from leasing its buses to private certified carriers or prohibit the county from providing school bus service. [1981 c 319 § 1; 1979 c 151 § 39; 1974 ex.s. c 167 § 1.]

RCW 36.57.020 Public transportation authority authorized. Every county, except a county in which a metropolitan municipal corporation is performing the function of public transportation on May 5, 1974, is authorized to create a county transportation authority which shall perform the function of public transportation. Such authority shall embrace all the territory within a single county and all cities and towns therein. [1974 ex.s. c 167 § 2.]

RCW 36.57.030 Membership—Compensation. Every county which undertakes the transportation function pursuant to RCW 36.57.020 shall create by resolution of the county legislative body a county transportation authority which shall be composed as follows:

(1) The elected officials of the county legislative body, not to exceed three such elected officials;

(2) The mayor of the most populous city within the county;

(3) The mayor of a city with a population less than five thousand, to be selected by the mayors of all such cities within the county;

(4) The mayor of a city with a population greater than five thousand, excluding the most populous city, to be selected by the mayors of all such cities within the county: PROVIDED, HOWEVER, That if there is no city with a population greater than five thousand, excluding the most populous city, then the sixth member who shall be an elected official, shall be selected by the other two mayors selected pursuant to subsections (2) and (3) of this section; and

(5) An individual recommended by the labor organization representing the public transportation employees within the county transportation authority. If the public transportation employees are represented by more than one labor organization, all such labor organizations shall select the nonvoting member by majority vote. The nonvoting member shall comply with all governing bylaws and policies of the authority. The chair or cochairs of the county transportation authority shall exclude the nonvoting member from attending any executive session held for the purpose of discussing negotiations with labor organizations. The chair or cochairs may exclude the nonvoting member from attending any other executive session.

The members of the authority shall be selected within sixty days after the date of the resolution creating such authority.

Any member of the authority who is a mayor or an elected official selected pursuant to subsection (4) of this section and whose office is not a full time position shall receive one hundred dollars for each day attending official meetings of the authority. [2010 c 278 § 2; 1974 ex.s. c 167 § 3.]

RCW 36.57.040 Powers and duties. Every county transportation authority created to perform the function of public transportation pursuant to RCW 36.57.020 shall have the following powers:

(1) To prepare, adopt, carry out, and amend a general comprehensive plan for public transportation service.

(2) To acquire by purchase, condemnation, gift, or grant and to lease, construct, add to, improve, replace, repair, maintain, operate, and regulate the use of any transportation facilities and properties, including terminal and parking facilities, together with all lands, rights-of-way, property, equipment, and accessories necessary for such systems and facilities.

(3) To fix rates, tolls, fares, and charges for the use of such facilities and to establish various routes and classes of service. Fares or charges may be adjusted or eliminated for any distinguishable class of users including, but not limited to[,] senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and students.

(4) If a county transit authority extends its transportation function to any area in which service is already offered by any company holding a certificate of public convenience and necessity from the Washington utilities and transportation commission under RCW 81.68.040, to acquire by purchase or condemnation at the fair market value, from the person holding the existing certificate for providing the services, that portion of the operating authority and equipment representing the services within the area of public operation, or to contract with such person or corporation to continue to operate such service or any part thereof for time and upon such terms and conditions as provided by contract.

(5) (a) To contract with the United States or any agency thereof, any state or agency thereof, any metropolitan municipal corporation, any other county, city, special district, or governmental agency and any private person, firm, or corporation for the purpose of receiving gifts or grants or securing loans or advances for preliminary planning and feasibility studies, or for the design, construction, operation, or maintenance of transportation facilities and ambulance services: PROVIDED, That before the authority enters into any such contract for the provision of ambulance service, it shall submit to the voters a proposition authorizing such contracting authority, and a majority of those voting thereon shall have approved the proposition; and

(b) To contract with any governmental agency or with any private person, firm, or corporation for the use by either contracting party of all or any part of the facilities, structures, lands, interests in lands, air rights over lands, and rights-of-way of all kinds which are owned, leased, or held by the other party and for the purpose of planning, constructing, or operating any facility or performing any service related to transportation which the county is authorized to operate or perform, on such terms as may be agreed upon by the contracting parties: PROVIDED, That before any contract for the lease or operation of any transportation facilities shall be let to any private person, firm, or corporation, competitive bids shall first be called for and contracts awarded in accord with the procedures established in accord with RCW 36.32.240, 36.32.250, and 36.32.270.

(6) In addition to all other powers and duties, an authority shall have the power to own, construct, purchase, lease, add to, and maintain any real and personal property or property rights necessary for the conduct of the affairs of the authority. An authority may sell, lease, convey, or otherwise dispose of any authority real or personal property no longer necessary for the conduct of the affairs of the authority. An authority may enter into contracts to carry out the provisions of this section. [2020 c 274 § 17; 1982 c 10 § 6. Prior: 1981 c 319 § 2; 1981 c 25 § 3; 1974 ex.s. c 167 § 4.]

Severability—1982 c 10: See note following RCW 6.13.080.

RCW 36.57.050 Chair—General manager. The authority shall elect a chair, and appoint a general manager who shall be experienced in administration, and who shall act as executive secretary to, and administrative officer for the authority. He or she shall also be empowered to employ such technical and other personnel as approved by the authority. The general manager shall be paid such salary and allowed such expenses as shall be determined by the authority. The general manager shall hold office at the pleasure of the authority, and shall not be removed until after notice is given him or her, and an opportunity for a hearing before the authority as to the reason for his or her removal. [2009 c 549 § 4095; 1974 ex.s. c 167 § 5.]

RCW 36.57.060 Transportation fund—Contributions. Each authority shall establish a fund to be designated as the "transportation fund", in which shall be placed all sums received by the authority from any source, and out of which shall be expended all sums disbursed by the authority. The county treasurer shall be the custodian of the fund, and the county auditor shall keep the record of the receipts and disbursements, and shall draw and the county treasurer shall honor and pay all warrants, which shall be approved before issuance and payment as directed by the authority.

The county and each city or town which is included in the authority shall contribute such sums towards the expense for maintaining and operating the authority as shall be agreed upon between them. [1974 ex.s. c 167 § 6.]

RCW 36.57.070 Public transportation plan. The authority shall adopt a public transportation plan. Such plan shall be a general comprehensive plan designed to best serve the residents of the entire county. Prior to adoption of the plan, the authority shall provide a minimum of sixty days during which sufficient hearings shall be held to provide interested persons an opportunity to participate in development of the plan. [1974 ex.s. c 167 § 7.]

RCW 36.57.080 Transfer of transportation powers and rights to authority—Funds—Contract indebtedness. On the effective date of the proposition approved by the voters in accord with RCW 35.95.040 or 82.14.045, as now or hereafter amended, the authority shall have and exercise all rights with respect to the construction, acquisition, maintenance, operation, extension, alteration, repair, control and management of passenger transportation which the county or any city located within such county shall have been previously empowered to exercise and such powers shall not thereafter be exercised by the county or such cities without the consent of the authority. The county and all cities within such county upon demand of the authority shall transfer to the authority all unexpended funds earmarked or budgeted from any source for public transportation, including funds receivable. The county in which an authority is located shall have the power to contract indebtedness and issue bonds pursuant to chapter 36.67 RCW to enable the authority to carry out the purposes of this chapter and RCW

35.95.040 or 82.14.045, as now or hereafter amended, and the purposes of this chapter and RCW 35.95.040 or 82.14.045, as now or hereafter amended, shall constitute a "county purpose" as that term is used in chapter 36.67 RCW. [1975 1st ex.s. c 270 § 5; 1974 ex.s. c 167 § 8.]

Severability—Effective date—1975 1st ex.s. c 270: See notes following RCW 35.58.272.

RCW 36.57.090 Acquisition of existing transportation system—Assumption of labor contracts—Transfer of employees—Preservation of benefits—Collective bargaining. A county transportation authority may acquire any existing transportation system by conveyance, sale, or lease. In any purchase from a county or city, the authority shall receive credit from the county or city for any federal assistance and state matching assistance used by the county or city in acquiring any portion of such system. The authority shall assume and observe all existing labor contracts relating to such system and, to the extent necessary for operation of facilities, all of the employees of such acquired transportation system whose duties are necessary to operate efficiently the facilities acquired shall be appointed to comparable positions to those which they held at the time of such transfer, and no employee or retired or pensioned employee of such systems shall be placed in any worse position with respect to pension seniority, wages, sick leave, vacation or other benefits that he or she enjoyed as an employee of such system prior to such acquisition. The authority shall engage in collective bargaining with the duly appointed representatives of any employee labor organization having existing contracts with the acquired transportation system and may enter into labor contracts with such employee labor organization. [2009 c 549 § 4096; 1974 ex.s. c 167 § 9.]

RCW 36.57.100 Counties authorized to perform public transportation function in unincorporated areas—Exceptions. Every county, except a county in which a metropolitan municipal corporation is performing the public transportation function as of July 1, 1975, is authorized to perform such function in such portions of the unincorporated areas of the county, except within the boundaries of a public transportation benefit area established pursuant to chapter 36.57A RCW, as the county legislative body shall determine and the county shall have those powers as are specified in RCW 36.57.040 with respect to the provision of public transportation as is authorized pursuant to RCW 36.57.040. [1975 1st ex.s. c 270 § 9.]

Severability—Effective date—1975 1st ex.s. c 270: See notes following RCW 35.58.272.

RCW 36.57.110 Boundaries of unincorporated transportation benefit areas. The legislative body of any county is hereby authorized to create and define the boundaries of unincorporated transportation benefit areas within the unincorporated areas of the county, following school district or election precinct lines, as far as practicable. Such areas shall include only those portions of the unincorporated area of the county which could reasonably assume to

benefit from the provision of public transportation services. [1975 1st ex.s. c 270 § 10.]

Severability—Effective date—1975 1st ex.s. c 270: See notes following RCW 35.58.272.

RCW 36.57.120 Rail fixed guideway public transportation system—Safety program plan and security and emergency preparedness plan. (1)

Each county transportation authority that owns or operates a rail fixed guideway public transportation system as defined in RCW 81.104.015 shall submit a system safety program plan and a system security and emergency preparedness plan for that guideway to the state department of transportation by September 1, 1999, or at least one hundred eighty calendar days before beginning operations or instituting significant revisions to its plans. These plans must describe the county transportation authority's procedures for (a) reporting and investigating any reportable incident, accident, or security breach and identifying and resolving hazards or security vulnerabilities discovered during planning, design, construction, testing, or operations, (b) developing and submitting corrective action plans and annual safety and security audit reports, (c) facilitating on-site safety and security reviews by the state department of transportation and the federal transit administration, and (d) addressing passenger and employee safety and security. The plans must, at a minimum, conform to the standards adopted by the state department of transportation as set forth in the most current version of the Washington state rail safety oversight program standard manual as it exists on March 25, 2016, or such subsequent date as may be provided by the department by rule, consistent with the purposes of this section. If required by the department, the county transportation authority shall revise its plans to incorporate the department's review comments within sixty days after their receipt, and resubmit its revised plans for review.

(2) Each county transportation authority shall implement and comply with its system safety program plan and system security and emergency preparedness plan. The county transportation authority shall perform internal safety and security audits to evaluate its compliance with the plans, and submit its audit schedule to the department of transportation pursuant to the requirements in the most current version of the Washington state rail safety oversight program standard manual as it exists on March 25, 2016, or such subsequent date as may be provided by the department by rule, consistent with the purposes of this section. The county transportation authority shall prepare an annual report for its internal safety and security audits undertaken in the prior year and submit it to the department no later than February 15th. The department shall establish the requirements for the annual report. The contents of the annual report must include, at a minimum, the dates the audits were conducted, the scope of the audit activity, the audit findings and recommendations, the status of any corrective actions taken as a result of the audit activity, and the results of each audit in terms of the adequacy and effectiveness of the plans.

(3) Each county transportation authority shall notify the department of transportation, pursuant to the most current version of the Washington state rail safety oversight program standard manual as

it exists on March 25, 2016, or such subsequent date as may be provided by the department by rule, consistent with the purposes of this section, any reportable incident, accident, security breach, hazard, or security vulnerability. The department may adopt rules further defining any reportable incident, accident, security breach, hazard, or security vulnerability. The county transportation authority shall investigate any reportable incident, accident, security breach, hazard, or security vulnerability and provide a written investigation report to the department as described in the most current version of the Washington state rail safety oversight program standard manual as it exists on March 25, 2016, or such subsequent date as may be provided by the department by rule, consistent with the purposes of this section.

(4) The system security and emergency preparedness plan required in subsection (1) of this section is exempt from public disclosure under chapter 42.56 RCW. However, the system safety program plan as described in this section is not subject to this exemption. [2016 c 33 § 5; 2007 c 422 § 4; 2005 c 274 § 270; 1999 c 202 § 4.]

Effective date—2016 c 33: See note following RCW 81.104.115.

Effective date—1999 c 202: See note following RCW 35.21.228.

RCW 36.57.130 Public transportation for persons with special needs. (1) Effective January 1, 2001, in addition to any other authority granted under this chapter, a county transportation authority may be created to purchase, acquire, maintain, operate, or lease transportation services, equipment, and facilities for public transportation limited only to persons with special needs by any method or combination of methods provided by the authority.

(2) As used in this section, "persons with special needs" means those persons, including their personal attendants, who because of physical or mental disability, income status, or age are unable to transport themselves or purchase transportation.

(3) The county transportation authority may fix, regulate, and control fares and rates to be charged for these transportation services. [2001 c 89 § 1.]

RCW 36.57.140 Green electrolytic hydrogen and renewable hydrogen—Power to produce, distribute, and use. (1) A county public transportation authority as authorized under this chapter and an unincorporated transportation benefit area as authorized in RCW 36.57.100 may:

(a) Produce, distribute, and use green electrolytic hydrogen and renewable hydrogen for internal operations;

(b) Produce, distribute for sale, or sell green electrolytic hydrogen and renewable hydrogen at wholesale or to an end-use customer; and

(c) (i) Sell green electrolytic hydrogen and renewable hydrogen at wholesale or to an end-use customer to or through facilities that distribute, compress, store, liquefy, or dispense green electrolytic hydrogen or renewable hydrogen for end use as a transportation fuel.

(ii) For the purposes of (c) (i) of this subsection, county public transportation authorities and unincorporated transportation benefit

areas may own, operate, or own and operate pipelines or dispensing facilities for green electrolytic hydrogen or renewable hydrogen for end use as a transportation fuel if all such pipelines and dispensing facilities are: (A) Located in the area where the county public transportation authority or unincorporated transportation benefit area is authorized to provide public transportation service; (B) located within the area where the county public transportation authority or unincorporated transportation benefit area is authorized to provide public transportation service and are service connected; or (C) located within the area where the county public transportation authority or unincorporated transportation benefit area is authorized to provide public transportation service and are pursuant to a partnership or agreement with one or more public or private partners.

(2) Nothing in this section authorizes a county public transportation authority or unincorporated transportation benefit area to sell green electrolytic hydrogen or renewable hydrogen delivered by pipeline to an end-use customer of a gas company.

(3) Nothing in this section subjects a county public transportation authority or unincorporated transportation benefit area to the jurisdiction of the utilities and transportation commission, except that the utilities and transportation commission may administer and enforce state and federal pipeline safety requirements, as authorized in chapter 81.88 RCW, including applicable fees payable to the utilities and transportation commission.

(4) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(a) "Green electrolytic hydrogen" has the same meaning provided in RCW 54.04.190.

(b) "Renewable hydrogen" has the same meaning provided in RCW 54.04.190.

(c) "Gas company" has the same meaning provided in RCW 80.04.010. [2023 c 234 § 4.]