

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5362

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, March 3, 1995

Title: An act relating to airport siting.

Brief Description: Creating the airport siting council.

Sponsors: Senators Smith and Heavey.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/8/95, 3/3/95 [DPS, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5362 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Owen, Chair; Heavey, Vice Chair; Fairley, Morton, Oke, Prentice, Prince and Schow.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Kohl, Rasmussen and Wood.

Staff: Brian McMorrow (786-7304)

Background: The Puget Sound Regional Council, formerly the Puget Sound Council of Governments, is the designated regional transportation planning organization for King, Pierce, Kitsap and Snohomish counties, and it is responsible for adopting and maintaining the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, which includes the Regional Airport System Plan. Before regional officials can site or expand an airport in the four-county area, they must first modify the Regional Airport System Plan.

Concerned that Seattle-Tacoma International Airport did not have sufficient capacity to meet the region's future air transportation needs, the Puget Sound Council of Governments (PSOG) and the Port of Seattle created the Flight Plan Project in 1988. The project's participants named themselves the Puget Sound Air Transportation Committee and began exploring the need for additional airport capacity in the region. After almost three years of work, the committee recommended a three-part airport strategy: add a dependent runway at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport before 2000, introduce scheduled air carrier service to Paine Field in Snohomish County before 2000, and identify and develop an airport site in Pierce or Thurston County by 2010.

Communities affected by the committee's recommendations roundly criticized the recommendations, so the PSRC decided to assess the issue independently. In January 1993 the PSRC's General Assembly passed resolution A-93-03, creating a "dual-track" that

included a search for a major supplemental airport site and site-specific studies related to a dependent runway at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

Although the PSRC identified several sites as candidates for a new airport, public pressure mounted and made it difficult to choose a site. So, in October 1994 the executive board of the PSRC announced that no feasible site for a major supplemental airport could be found within the four-county region and ended its search. The board also affirmed the PSRC's approval of a new runway at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, if the project meets the conditions of the earlier resolution. It also recommended that the state compensate communities adversely affected by essential public facilities, which include airports, and continue the search for a major supplemental airport in cooperation with the PSRC.

Summary of Substitute Bill: An airport siting council is established. It comprises six members: a Transportation Commissioner, the Secretary of the Department of Transportation, the Director of Community, Trade, and Economic Development, five members of the public, and a member of the Growth Management Hearings Board.

The Transportation Commission may declare an impasse after 2001 if local and regional officials fail to site an airport of statewide significance. Once convened the Airport Siting Council has 360 days to make a decision regarding the siting of an airport. The Governor may reject the council's decision within 60 days; if he or she does reject the decision, the council must provide an alternative site within 30 days. All political subdivisions are bound by the council's decision, and regional transportation planning organizations affected by the decision must plan accordingly. However, if the Legislature opposes the decision, it may invalidate it with a simple majority from each house.

The council may use the Department of Transportation's staff, and it may hire outside consultants. It must review existing information and findings pertinent to its task, but it is not limited to examining sites already studied. The council must hold public hearings for each of the sites under consideration. It may not interfere with the construction of the third runway at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. Construction of the new airport may not begin for at least 17 years after the council has made its decision.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill has a narrower title and adds language that prohibits the council from interfering with the construction of a third runway at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. It adds three members of the public to the airport siting council and requires a fair and open public process with at least two public hearings for each airport site under consideration. It requires the council to make the siting decision, not the Governor. The Governor may only veto the decision. The substitute restricts the council from declaring an impasse before 2001. It also prohibits construction at that site for at least 17 years after the council has made its decision. A majority from each house may invalidate the council's decision; the original bill required two-thirds from each house. Finally, the substitute removes the appropriation for \$500,000.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Local and regional governments cannot site an airport of statewide significance because of political pressure, yet the citizens of the state may need additional airport capacity in the future. This bill is not an attempt to stop the third runway at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

Testimony Against: Local and regional governments have the responsibility for siting airports. The Puget Sound Regional Council's search for a major supplemental airport was successful; it concluded that there was no feasible site within the Puget Sound region, and it opted for a third runway at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport with certain caveats. Airports should not be singled out; the state needs a transportation facility siting council, which should include airports.

Testified: Senator Adam Smith, prime sponsor; Senator Michael Heavey, co-sponsor; Richard Kennedy, Mayor, City of Des Moines (pro); Ken Reid (pro); Senator Kevin Quigley (con); Linda Hunt, Snohomish County Rejects Airport (con); Hans Dunshee (con); Bill Brubaker, WSDOT, Aviation Division (con); Don Bakken, Arlington Airport (con); Curt Smelser, ERAAS, (pro); Jeanne Moeller, RCAA (pro); Matt Rosenberg, RCAA (pro); Mark Krandel, Snohomish County (con); Janet Pritchard, Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber (con); Wendy Hall, Rural Citizens Against Urban Sprawl (con); Steve Leahy, Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce (pro); David Bailey, WA Airport Management Assn. (con); Jorgen Bader, Seattle Community Council Federation.