

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2166

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 25, 1998

Title: An act relating to barriers to coordinated transportation services.

Brief Description: Encouraging coordinated transportation services.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation Policy & Budget (originally sponsored by Representatives Huff, K. Schmidt, Clements, Buck, Talcott, Johnson, Mitchell, Carlson, Delvin, Cooke and Chandler).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 4/1/97, 4/2/97 [DP]; 2/19/98, 2/25/98 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Prince, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Goings, Haugen, Horn, Jacobsen, Morton, Oke, Patterson, Prentice, Rasmussen and Sellar.

Staff: Gary Lebow (786-7304)

Background: In 1996 the Legislative Transportation Committee (LTC) was directed to conduct a public transportation assessment of eight tasks to address the state's interest in and evaluation of transit. Study oversight was provided by a Transit Working Group, which consisted of four House and four Senate members. The group forwarded a series of study recommendations to LTC, and they are contained in the 1996 Public Transportation Assessment. One of the recommendations for special needs transportation was to establish an Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) to facilitate coordination among public and private transportation providers.

There are a number of agencies and programs involved with providing and/or sponsoring transportation services for persons with special needs. At the state level, the Department of Social and Health Services and the Superintendent of Public Instruction play major roles in providing for transportation. At the local level transit agencies, area agencies on aging, senior services and county human services all provide transportation for special needs populations.

Transportation provided by an agency or a program is often for selected groups of people which meet specific eligibility requirements for that particular agency or program. This creates a situation in which multiple transportation providers are running duplicate routes serving only their selected population, which can result in costly and inefficient service and reduced service levels or areas.

In the 1997-99 transportation budget, \$1 million was appropriated to the Department of Transportation for grants to facilitate and demonstrate cooperation among transportation providers. Administration of this effort is overseen by a council, appointed by the Secretary of Transportation, which mirrors the council provided for this legislation (nine voting and eight nonvoting members). In 1997, grants were made to five local and private nonprofit agencies for six different contracts. The department will report to the Legislature on the results of these grants.

The Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) regulates every private, nonprofit transportation provider in the state. This includes setting insurance requirements, safety requirements for vehicles used, rules to ensure that the vehicle used is adequate for the proposed service, and to regulate the fares charged by these providers.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Legislature declares its intent to coordinate transportation services and programs to achieve increased efficiencies, resulting in expansion of services to a greater number of persons with special transportation needs.

The Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) is created. The council consists of nine voting members and eight nonvoting legislative members. The nine voting members are the Secretary of Transportation, who serves as chair; the Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services; the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and six members, serving two-year terms, appointed by the Governor, and representing consumers of special needs transportation, pupil transportation, the Community Transportation Association of the Northwest, the Community Action Council Association, and the Washington State Transit Association. Four members from the House of Representatives and four members from the Senate, representing each caucus and the Transportation, House Appropriations and Senate Ways and Means Committees, are appointed by the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate respectively. The council is classified as a Class 1 board, which restricts reimbursement of members to expenses only.

ACCT is responsible for: (1) developing standards and strategies for coordinating special needs transportation; (2) identifying, developing, funding (as resources are available), and monitoring demonstration projects; (3) identifying barriers to coordinated transportation; (4) recommending statutory changes to the Legislature to assist in coordinated transportation; and (5) working with the Office of Financial Management to make necessary changes for identification of transportation costs in executive agency budgets.

The council is directed to report to the Legislature on December 1, 1998, and every two years thereafter on council activities, including results of demonstration projects and associated benefits. The Department of Transportation is to provide support for the council. The council is dissolved on June 30, 2003.

The UTC's authority to regulate fares charged by paratransit providers is eliminated.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The legislative intent to implement coordination of transportation services among providers is strengthened.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: 1997: There have been numerous studies all coming to the same conclusion that coordination of transportation services will generate significant savings and benefits. The problem is that nothing ever happens to implement the studies. This bill will establish coordination of transportation services as a priority of the Legislature and provide a forum for the efforts to be successful. **1998:** The informal council that was created by the proviso language in the transportation appropriations act lacks the authority and mandate that are contained within this bill.

Testimony Against: 1997: None. **1998:** None.

Testified: 1997: PRO: Gordon Kirkemo, WSDOT; Pat White, DSHS; Tom Young, Pierce County Transit; Roger Eastman, Superintendent of Public Instruction's Office. **1998:** PRO: Gordon Kirkemo, WSDOT.