
Transportation Committee

HB 1642

Brief Description: Restructuring certain transportation agencies.

Sponsors: Representatives Murray, Woods, Campbell and Simpson.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Governor appoints Secretary of Transportation, with consent of Senate.
- "Transportation Policy Institute" established within the Transportation Commission.
- Legislative Transportation Committee replaced on Transportation Performance Audit Board by Transportation Commission.
- Legislative Transportation Committee dissolved.

Hearing Date: February 2, 2005

Staff: Beth Redfield (786-7347).

Background:

Under current law, the Washington Transportation Commission oversees the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and appoints the Secretary of Transportation. The Secretary may only be removed for cause. The Commission is composed of seven voting members, appointed by the Governor with the consent of the Senate, and the Secretary who sits as a nonvoting member. The seven appointed members serve for six year terms, may not include more than four members from the same political party, and must include four members from Western Washington and three members from Eastern Washington. In addition to overseeing the WSDOT, the Commission has numerous other statutory duties, including statewide transportation planning, bonds issuance, serving as the state's tolling authority and setting ferry fares, and sharing responsibility for project selection and funding.

The Legislative Transportation Committee (LTC) is a statutory legislative agency established to, among other things, conduct studies of designated transportation issues and to make recommendations to the full Legislature regarding statewide transportation policy. The LTC is composed of twelve senators and twelve representatives, with not more than six members from each house representing the same political party.

The Transportation Performance Audit Board (TPAB) was established in 2003 to primarily provide oversight and accountability of transportation-related agencies through the use of directed agency reviews, and functional and performance audits. The TPAB is composed of four legislators, five citizen members with specified transportation-related expertise appointed by the Governor, an at large member appointed by the Governor, and the legislative auditor as an ex officio member. The TPAB may conduct agency performance and outcome measurement reviews, and must recommend to the LTC's executive committee whether a full performance or functional agency audit is appropriate. If a performance audit is requested by the LTC, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) must add the audit to its biennial audit work plan. The legislative auditor must, to the greatest extent possible, hire private consultants to conduct the performance audits.

Summary of Bill:

The Secretary of Transportation is appointed by the Governor, with the consent of the Senate, and serves at the pleasure of the Governor. The Secretary assumes authority previously directed to the Washington Transportation Commission to propose the WSDOT agency budget and to authorize departmental request legislation.

The Washington Transportation Commission retains certain authority, including statewide transportation planning, bonds issuance, serving as the state's tolling authority and setting ferry fares, and sharing responsibility for project selection and funding.

The Transportation Policy Institute (TPI) is established within the Washington Transportation Commission, to conduct research, prepare studies, and periodically submit recommendations to the Legislature regarding transportation policy issues of statewide significance. The TPI is governed by a Board of Directors composed of four legislators, two Commission members, the Secretary of Transportation, and the executive director of the Washington State Transportation Center as a nonvoting member. The Commission must provide staff support to the TPI. The TPI may appoint working groups, which may include other legislators from the standing committees on transportation.

The LTC is dissolved. The LTC staff support of TPAB is removed and replaced with staff support provided by the Washington Transportation Commission, and the TPAB makes performance audit recommendations directly to the Commission. The Commission, not JLARC, must add the requested audits to its biennial audit work plan. The Commission administrator, not the legislative auditor, must, to the greatest extent possible, hire private consultants to conduct the performance audits. The TPAB's authority regarding directed agency reviews, and functional and performance audits, is expanded to include local transportation entities.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 1, 2005.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.