

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5961

As of January 23, 2014

Title: An act relating to the enforcement of regional transit authority fares.

Brief Description: Concerning the enforcement of regional transit authority fares.

Sponsors: Senators Mullet, Fain and Hobbs.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/22/14.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Hayley Gamble (786-7452)

Background: A Regional Transit Authority (RTA) may issue a civil infraction citation to a user of its public transportation system who has not paid their fare, provided proof of payment, or will not leave the facility when requested to do so. Currently there is one RTA, Sound Transit. The required content of the citation is prescribed in current law. The specific format of the citation notice is determined by the state Supreme Court through their rulemaking process which in turn charges the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) with prescribing the content of the infraction form. Parking, standing, and stopping infraction tickets are excepted from the requirement to be prescribed by AOC and instead are approved through a simpler process.

Sound Transit currently issues civil infraction notices that are consistent with requirements laid out in statute, which includes using a form prescribed by AOC. Sound Transit submits the prescribed infraction form to the local district court, who then mails out the infraction notice. An alternative method would be to issue a printed infraction notice using a handheld device at the time of the infraction directly to the fare evader. The specific format of the infraction form printed from a handheld device must be approved by the Supreme Court through their rulemaking process which includes being determined by and approved by the AOC.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Proposed First Substitute): The requirement for an RTA to issue a civil infraction citation in the same manner as prescribed for other civil infraction citations is

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stricken. The notice of civil infraction issued by an RTA enforcement officer must be approved by AOC in the same manner as for parking, standing, and stopping infractions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: We want everyone to pay for their tickets; fare evasion is a problem. The courts will still need to approve the ticket format. Sound Transit has 15 fare enforcement offices. The current process costs Sound Transit over \$1 million to process fare evasion tickets. Each officer spends 2.7 hours per day completing paperwork, then the ticket is sent to the district court mails out the tickets. Twelve percent of tickets sent out are returned as undeliverable. Sound Transit would like to issue tickets on the trains, and the only practical way to do this is electronically. Processing of tickets could be reduced to one hour per day.

OTHER: Consistency of tickets is beneficial to citizens. The Uniform Infraction Citation Committee provides a consistent but adaptable application of standards. Some testifiers are concerned that if one exception is made, then other agencies will ask for exceptions. Fare evasion can be elevated to theft so these tickets contain information that prosecutors will need. We can continue to work with Sound Transit to come up with a solution. This bill is not necessary for us to approve an alternative ticket format.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Mullet, prime sponsor; Desmond Brown, Sound Transit.

OTHER: Kevin Ringus, DMCJA; Mellani McAleenan, Board For Judicial Administration.