
Transportation Committee

HB 2095

Brief Description: Concerning preliminary work to develop a process for planning for a new Interstate 5 bridge spanning the Columbia river.

Sponsors: Representatives Wylie, Stonier, Harris, Vick, Clibborn, Fey, McBride and Macri.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Designates the Interstate 5 (I-5) Bridge as a project of statewide significance.
- Encourages the Governor to enter into an memorandum of understanding with the Governor of Oregon with a variety of purposes, including selecting a joint Oregon-Washington legislative action committee to begin a process towards project development for a new I-5 Bridge.

Hearing Date: 2/20/17

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

The Interstate 5 (I-5) Bridge crosses the Columbia River and connects Vancouver, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, with two identical bridge structures. One bridge structure carries traffic northbound to Vancouver, and the other bridge structure carries traffic southbound to Portland. The northbound bridge was built in 1917, and the southbound bridge was built in 1958.

The Columbia River Crossing (CRC) Project, as described in the record of decision, would have replaced the two I-5 bridges, extended light rail to Vancouver, improved closely spaced interchanges, and enhanced pedestrian and bicycle paths. The estimated project costs ranged from \$3.1 billion to \$3.5 billion. Between 2005 and 2013, \$196.6 million was spent on the project, with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) spending \$94.1 million and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) spending \$102.5 million. The project was officially discontinued in the spring of 2014.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

In 1997 a process was enacted to expedite the development of industrial projects of statewide significance. To qualify for designation as a project of statewide significance, a project must meet capital investment or job creation requirements. Border-crossing projects, private projects investing in manufacturing or research and development, projects that will provide a net environmental benefit, and a project that will further commercialization of an innovation may all be designated as projects of statewide significance. An application for designation as a project of statewide significance must be submitted to the Department of Commerce. The application must include a letter of approval from jurisdictions where a project is located and must commit to providing the local staff necessary to expedite the completion of a project.

Counties and cities requesting a project's designation as one of statewide significance must ensure the participation of local officials on the public-private team expediting a project's completion. The Office of Regulatory Assistance must provide facilitation and coordination services to expedite completion of industrial projects of statewide significance. The project proponents may provide the funding necessary for the local jurisdiction to hire the staff required to expedite the process.

Summary of Bill:

The process for designating a project of statewide significance is modified to allow for legislative designation. Projects of statewide significance that are designated by the Legislature are exempted from the application requirements. An I-5 bridge that crosses the Columbia River is designated as a project of statewide significance.

The Governor is encouraged to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Governor of Oregon, regarding the construction of a new Interstate 5 bridge, that achieves the following purposes:

- selects a joint Oregon-Washington legislative action committee to work with both states' departments of transportation, transportation commissions, and stakeholders to begin a process toward project development. The first meeting of the legislative action committee must occur by December 15, 2017;
- reviews and confirms lead roles related to permitting, construction, operation and maintenance of a future I-5 bridge project;
- establishes a process to seek public comment on the I-5 bridge project development plan;
- works to ensure that there are sufficient resources available to the state departments of transportation to inventory and utilize existing data to allow for nonduplicative and efficient decision making regarding a new project;
- examines all potential mass transit options available for a new I-5 bridge project;
- utilizes design-build procurement or better innovative project delivery method and determines the least costly, most efficient project management, and best practices tools consistent with the work already completed;
- considers the creation of a Columbia River bridge authority to review bridge needs and make recommendations to both states regarding financing, timing of improvements and operations of the bridges; and
- reports to the legislatures of each state the findings and recommendations of the legislative action committee by December 15, 2018.

The Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) must conduct a planning inventory to document existing planning data related to the construction of a new I-5 bridge. The WSDOT must report back to the Legislature on the details of the planning inventory.

Appropriation: The sum of \$350,000 from the Motor Vehicle Fund is appropriated to the WSDOT for a planning inventory.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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