
Transportation Committee

HB 2646

Brief Description: Facilitating transportation projects of statewide significance.

Sponsors: Representatives Wylie, Stonier, Tharinger, Clibborn, McBride, Harris, Macri, Cody, Tarleton, Appleton, Ortiz-Self and Slatter.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides criteria for a transportation project of statewide significance.
- Requires the Washington State Department of Transportation and certain local jurisdictions to take various steps regarding a transportation project of statewide significance.
- Allows the Legislature to designate a transportation project of statewide significance.

Hearing Date: 1/24/18

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

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

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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:

Project Criteria.

A transportation project of statewide significance is defined as a project that will:

- improve accessibility for a significant number of Washington residents;
- improve the reliability of commute times for residents of the area;
- improve the movement of freight through the corridor;
- provide safety improvements and contribute to a reduction in injuries and fatalities;
- maximize opportunities for economic development in the region;
- make improvement to transit, pedestrian, and bike access; and
- serve as a critical route for both national and state defense.

A transportation project of statewide significance must also be valued in excess of \$1 billion, and provide the direct employment of at least 1,500 persons over the life of the project.

Application and Application Process.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) must develop the application for designating a transportation project as a transportation project of statewide significance. The WSDOT may designate a transportation project as a transportation project of statewide significance, upon review of an application and determination that it meets the criteria specified in statute and in rule.

An application to designate a transportation project as a transportation project of statewide significance must indicate how the project meets the criteria for a transportation project of statewide significance, as well as any other information required by the WSDOT. Such an application must also be accompanied by a letter of approval from each jurisdiction in which the project will be located, which must indicate support for the designation and that the jurisdiction has or will hire staff to expedite the project. Project proponents may provide funding for the hiring of such staff.

The Legislature may designate a transportation project as a transportation project of statewide significance. Such a project is not required to have an application or go through the application process.

Project Facilitation.

The WSDOT is required to assign a project facilitator or coordinator to every transportation project of statewide significance. This individual must assemble a team of state government, local government, and private officials to help meet the planning, permitting, and development needs of the project. The team must include those responsible for planning, permitting, and licensing; infrastructure development; workforce development services, including higher education; transportation services; and the provision of utilities. The project facilitator or coordinator must also work with each team member to expedite their actions in furtherance of the project and coordinate any cross border communications, if applicable.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 15, 2018.

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