

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5001

As Passed Senate, March 1, 2017

Title: An act relating to the election and authority of regional transit authority board members.

Brief Description: Modifying the election and authority of regional transit authority board members.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators O'Ban, Angel, Miloscia, Becker, Padden, Honeyford, King and Fortunato).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/25/17, 2/23/17 [DPS, DNP].

Floor Activity:

Passed Senate: 3/01/17, 29-20.

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes the board of a Regional Transit Authority from appointed to elected.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5001 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators King, Chair; Hobbs, Ranking Minority Member; Ericksen, Fortunato, Hawkins, O'Ban, Van De Wege, Walsh and Wilson.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Liias, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cleveland, Saldaña and Takko.

Staff: Hayley Gamble (786-7452)

Background: A Regional Transit Authority (RTA) is authorized to use its tax revenues to plan, construct, and operate high-capacity transportation, such as express bus service and light rail. There is currently one RTA—Sound Transit—which operates light rail, commuter rail, and express bus service in Puget Sound. An RTA is governed by a board consisting of

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no more than 25 members, based on one member per 145,000 of population within a member county.

Board members are local elected officials appointed by the county executive and confirmed by the county legislative body. The Secretary of Transportation, or designee, also sits on the board of an RTA.

Summary of First Substitute Bill: Eleven non-partisan RTA board members must be directly elected in 2018 from 11 districts containing approximately equal shares of the population. Board members may not hold other elected offices. Additionally, the Secretary of Transportation, or designee, is a non-voting member of the board.

A five-member districting commission must be appointed by the Governor as soon as possible and shall be funded by the RTA to define the 11 districts. An 11-district plan provided by the districting commission must ensure population is evenly divided between districts and that no more than five districts are solely within one county. A new commission will repeat the districting process every ten years after the release of census data. Elected members will serve four-year staggered terms.

A \$10,000 annual stipend and travel expenses are provided for RTA board members.

Election costs incurred by local jurisdictions for administering the election of an RTA's board will be reimbursed by the RTA.

This bill applies to current and future RTAs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Proposed Substitute: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: An agency responsible for \$54 billion needs to be directly accountable to the people through direct elections. If Sound Transit fails, they do not need to go back to the people to continue collecting taxes. Direct elections are healthy and proper. A constituent has had his property divided partly in and partly out of the Sound Transit boundary, and he has no representation on this issue. The Washington Policy Center has long been in support of Sound Transit having a directly elected board as this would approve accountability and transparency. Current checks and balances are insufficient and trust needs to be improved. Sound Transit never delivers on time or on budget. There is a lack of accountability and representation as demonstrated in the video share during the hearing. Seattle receives a lot of the funds paid by Pierce County.

CON: It is important to have local elected officials on the Sound Transit board. It is important to understand local issues such as housing, economic development, and planning issues to understand how to invest in transit. Sound Transit currently requires a supermajority for major votes. Sound Transit has good governance and is accountable. Sound Transit does not work in a vacuum. The University of Washington Station was built on time and on budget.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Steve O'Ban, Prime Sponsor; Mariya Frost, Washington Policy Center; Vic Bishop, Eastside Transportation Association; David Hablewitz, Stop405Tolls.org; Bill Popp, Eastside Transportation Association; Bruce Nurse, Eastside Transportation Association; Todd Woosley, Eastside Transportation Association; Zachary Kinneman, Taft Properties LCC; Jonathan Kinneman, citizen; Brian Sonntag, Retired Washington State Auditor; Suzanne Davis, citizen; Mark Harmsworth, Representative, 44th Legislative District.

CON: Marilyn Strickland, Mayor, City of Tacoma/Sound Transit Board Member.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.