

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## SB 6363

---

---

C 279 L 18  
Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Concerning a rail line over the Milwaukee Road corridor.

**Sponsors:** Senators Chase and Warnick.

**Senate Committee on Transportation**  
**House Committee on Transportation**

**Background:** In 1980, the Milwaukee Road railroad declared bankruptcy and sold some of its properties and land. In 1981, the Legislature appropriated \$3.5 million to purchase 213 miles of the railroad's right-of-way in eastern Washington.

The right-of-way owned by the state was eventually placed under the management and control of three state agencies: the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Department of Transportation (DOT). During the 1995 legislative interim, the Legislative Transportation Committee convened a Freight Rail and Freight Mobility Task Force to examine the Milwaukee Road corridor's potential for relieving freight congestion. The task force recommended resuming freight rail service over the portion of the former Milwaukee Road railroad running from Ellensburg to Lind.

DOT is authorized to negotiate a franchise agreement with a qualified rail carrier to operate service over the line. The legislation creating the consolidated transportation corridor was scheduled to sunset if DOT did not enter into a franchise agreement by July 1, 1999. Management of the trail between Ellensburg and Lind would remain with the three state agencies. In 1999, the Legislature extended the deadline for DOT to enter into a franchise agreement to 2006. In 2006, the Legislature extended the deadline to 2009, and in 2009, the deadline was extended to July 1, 2019.

Current language expiring certain statutes if DOT does not enter into a rail franchise agreement on the Milwaukee Road corridor by July 1, 2019, applies to statutes that:

- direct the parks commission to develop and maintain a cross-state trail facility;
- create a cross state trail account;
- define state agency ownership of various sections of the corridor; and
- direct negotiation of a rail franchise by DOT to operate in the corridor.

---

*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.*

**Summary:** Current language expiring certain statutes July 1, 2019, if DOT does not enter into a rail franchise agreement on the Milwaukee Road corridor are stricken. This applies to statutes that:

- direct the parks commission to develop and maintain a cross-state trail facility;
- create a cross state trail account;
- define state agency ownership of various sections of the corridor; and
- direct negotiation of a rail franchise by DOT to operate in the corridor.

Language that expired the statute directing transfer of various portions of the corridor to DOT ownership if DOT entered into a rail franchise agreement by July 1, 2019, is modified to state no ownership transfers shall occur unless a franchise agreement is entered into by DOT.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate	47	0	
House	98	0	(House amended)
Senate	49	0	(Senate concurred)

**Effective:** June 7, 2018