

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6440

As of February 6, 2018

Title: An act relating to an I-5/Exit 274 interchange project.

Brief Description: Concerning the I-5/Exit 274 interchange project.

Sponsors: Senator Ericksen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/05/18.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Adds funding for a highway project at the I-5/Exit 274 interchange.
- Directs the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to pursue grants and matching funds to complete construction of the project.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Erica Bramlet (786-7321)

Background: In 2009, an interchange justification report was performed for a full-diamond interchange at Exit 274 on Interstate 5 (I-5) in Blaine, Washington. In 2015, a \$45 million project for the full-diamond interchange was added to the project list during the Connecting Washington transportation package, but was removed during the legislative budget process in 2016. During the 2017 legislative budget process, \$12.1 million was added in the budget for an Exit 274 project, but was vetoed by the Governor.

WSDOT conducted two workshops with local stakeholders in 2017, at which they identified a need for a \$25 million project that would add a second southbound I-5 exit into Blaine and grade separation to avoid train traffic on SR 548 and Peace Portal Drive where the proposed southbound I-5 exit would land.

Summary of Bill: The bill appropriates \$1 million in the 2017-19 biennium for WSDOT to complete a new interchange justification report and begin environmental work for a project at the I-5/Exit 274 interchange in Blaine, Washington. It also adds an additional \$11.1 million of intended out-year funding in the 2019-21 biennium to the project list, and directs WSDOT

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to actively pursue \$12.9 million in grants or matching funds to fill the anticipated funding gap for the proposed \$25 million project.

Appropriation: \$1 million in Connecting Washington account—state funds.

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: PRO: The current Exit 274 in Blaine was under-engineered when the interstate system was first built, and provides only one southbound entrance into the city which is easily missed. The city of Blaine is rebuilding and wants to be the first to welcome the millions of people crossing the border into the United States from Canada. This project is needed to provide economic growth for their downtown and to connect the two parts of the city.

The project started out as \$45 million, and through the city officials and WSDOT diligently working together, they came up with a practical solution that will solve a lot of issues at once and has decreased the cost to \$25 million, \$500,000 of which is needed this biennium to update the 2009 interchange justification report. The border security x-ray machine that scans train cars causes traffic backup issues, and the federal government has said they cannot move it, so this project would include an overpass to help emergency vehicles and school buses avoid this bottleneck. The state allocation is needed now so that they can leverage the funding for federal grants.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Doug Ericksen, Prime Sponsor; Bonnie Onyon, Mayor of Blaine; David Wilbrecht, City Manager.

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