

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## ESHB 1994

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**As Passed House:**  
March 12, 2019

**Title:** An act relating to facilitating transportation projects of statewide significance.

**Brief Description:** Facilitating transportation projects of statewide significance.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Wylie, Vick, Stonier, Hoff and Harris).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Transportation: 2/20/19, 2/27/19 [DPS].

**Floor Activity:**

Passed House: 3/12/19, 69-28.

**Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill**

- Creates processes for designating certain transportation projects as transportation projects of statewide significance.
- Requires the Washington State Department of Transportation to take certain actions for each transportation project of statewide significance.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Fey, Chair; Slatter, 2nd Vice Chair; Valdez, 2nd Vice Chair; Wylie, 1st Vice Chair; Chapman, Doglio, Entenman, Gregerson, Kloba, Lovick, Mead, Orcutt, Ortiz-Self, Paul, Pellicciotti, Ramos and Riccelli.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Barkis, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Young, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Boehnke, Chambers, Dent, Dufault, Eslick, Goehner, Irwin, McCaslin, Shea and Van Werven.

**Staff:** David Munnecke (786-7315).

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*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.*

## **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, research, and development, projects that will provide a net environmental benefit, and projects 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. Counties and cities with projects must enter into agreements with the Office of Regulatory Assistance (ORA) and local project managers to expedite the processes necessary for the design and construction of projects. The ORA 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.

The Washington Legislature may also designate a project as a project of statewide significance, and such a project is not subject to the application process that otherwise applies.

## **Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill:**

In order to qualify as a transportation project of statewide significance, the project must:

- have a reasonable cost estimate to construct of more than \$1 billion;
- contain a bridge that connects two states that has a reasonable cost estimate to construct of at least \$500 million that would benefit from an expedited permitting process due to preexisting permits;
- improve accessibility for a significant number of Washington residents;
- alleviate congestion and improve the reliability of travel times for Washington residents and other users of the transportation system;
- 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 and the state;
- make improvements to transit, pedestrian, and bike access; and
- serve as a critical route for both national and state defense.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is required to develop an application for a transportation project of statewide significance. An application must be accompanied by at least one letter of approval from the legislative authority of any jurisdiction that will have the proposed transportation project of statewide significance within its boundaries. The letter of approval must state that the jurisdiction joins in the request for the designation of the transportation project as one of statewide significance and has or will hire the professional staff to expedite the processes necessary for the completion of the

project. Project proponents may provide the funding necessary for the jurisdiction to hire the professional staff. The application must contain information regarding the location of the project, how the project meets the criteria for a transportation project of statewide significance, and other information required by the WSDOT.

Projects may be designated as a transportation project of statewide significance by the WSDOT, through the completion of the application process, or by the Legislature.

The WSDOT is required to assign a project coordinator to each designated transportation project of statewide significance. This coordinator must assemble a team of state and local government and private officials to help meet the planning, permitting, and development needs of the project. This team must include those responsible for planning, permitting, licensing, infrastructure development, workforce development services, transportation services, and the provision of utilities. The coordinator must 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:** Available.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) This bill is designed to save time and money on an Interstate 5 (I-5) bridge replacement process. This designation would expedite permitting and allow a preexisting process to be used when necessary.

This bill creates an efficient regulatory pathway for large transportation infrastructure projects and will expedite the process. Such a process will be useful for replacing the current I-5 bridges across the Columbia River.

Congestion has a great cost. There is a need to streamline the project process, and United States Route 2, as well as I-5, would benefit from this process.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Wylie, prime sponsor; Ron Arp, Identity Clark County; and Brian Enslow, City of Vancouver.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.