

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1994

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Transportation, March 20, 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: Passed House: 3/12/19, 69-28.

Committee Activity: Transportation: 3/20/19, 3/20/19 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides criteria for a transportation project of statewide significance.
- Requires the Washington State Department of Transportation (DOT) to develop an application process for the designation of a transportation project of statewide significance.
- Directs DOT to assign a project coordinator and assemble a team of state and local government and private officials to help meet the project planning and permitting needs and work to expedite their actions.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hobbs, Chair; Saldaña, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Member; Cleveland, Fortunato, Lovelett, O'Ban, Padden, Randall, Takko, Wilson, C. and Zeiger.

Staff: Kim Johnson (786-7472)

Background: Washington State Department of Transportation. Presently, there is no process within DOT to designate a transportation project of statewide significance. There is also no one within DOT tasked solely to facilitate and coordinate permitting and other project delivery tasks with other agencies and levels of government for mega projects.

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.

Department of Commerce and Office of Regulatory Assistance. In 1997, a process was enacted to expedite developing 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 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 an approval letter from jurisdictions where a project is located and must commit to providing the local staff necessary to expedite completing a project.

In 2017, the Legislature amended this process to allow the Legislature to designate a project of statewide significance.

Summary of Bill: A transportation project of statewide significance means a project that will meet certain criteria including:

- alleviating congestion and improving the reliability of commute times and movement of freight through the corridor;
- maximizing opportunities for economic development in the region; and
- providing safety improvements.

The reasonable cost estimate to construct a transportation project of statewide significance must be at least \$1 billion. An eligible project must also contain a bridge that connects two states, that has a reasonable construction cost estimate of at least \$500 million, and would benefit from an expedited permitting process due to preexisting permits.

DOT must develop an application for designation of transportation projects of statewide significance. The application must include a letter of approval from the legislative authority of any jurisdiction that will have the proposed project within its boundaries. Jurisdictions must provide the professional staff required to expedite the processes necessary to complete the project. Project proponents may provide the funding necessary for a jurisdiction to hire professional staff necessary for expediting the permits.

The application must also contain information about the project, including how the project meets the specified criteria and any other information required by DOT.

The Legislature may also designate a transportation project as one of statewide significance, which makes the project subject to the project coordination process.

After designating a transportation project of statewide significance, DOT must assemble a team of state and local government and private officials to help meet the planning, permitting, and development needs of each designated project. DOT must work with the team to expedite their actions to further the project and coordinate any cross border communications, if applicable.

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: PRO: The changes made to the bill were about concerns some communities have about moving a project that they do not want forward too quickly. Our community in southwest Washington does not have that problem. There are many permits that can be refreshed that will work for a new project.

The replacement of the I-5 Bridge is about safety. Emergency responders can get caught on the wrong side of a bridge lift. The bridge is seismically unsound. Pedestrians and bicyclists that use the bridge are put in dangerous proximity to the vehicles using the bridge. It needs to be replaced and this bill will help move the project forward.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Sharon Wylie, Prime Sponsor; Amber Carter, Port of Vancouver; Ron Arp, Identity Clark County.

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