
Environment & Energy Committee

SB 5312

Brief Description: Facilitating transit-oriented development and increasing housing inventory.

Sponsors: Senators Mullet, Lias and Van De Wege.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes the use of appropriations to the Growth Management Planning and Environmental Review Fund to fund grants to cities to pay for certain planning-related costs related to transit-oriented development, including subarea plans and environmental impact statements.
- Requires the Department of Commerce to prioritize applications for grants to facilitate transit-oriented development to maximize certain specified objectives in the area covered by the grant proposal.

Hearing Date: 3/11/21

Staff: Robert Hatfield (786-7117).

Background:

Growth Management Planning and Environmental Review Fund.

The Growth Management Planning and Environmental Review Fund exists to make grants to assist counties and cities planning fully under the Growth Management Act (GMA) in preparing the State Environmental Policy Act environmental analyses that are integrated with comprehensive plans or subarea plans and development regulations. A county or city must be making substantial progress toward compliance with the GMA to be eligible for a grant.

Summary of Bill:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Appropriations to the Growth Management Planning and Environmental Review Fund for the purpose of grants to cities to facilitate transit-oriented development may be used to pay for the costs associated with the preparation of State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) environmental impact statements, planned action ordinances, subarea plans, costs associated with the utilization of other tools under the SEPA, and the costs of local code adoption and implementation of such efforts. Grant awards may only fund efforts that address environmental impacts and consequences, alternatives, and mitigation measures in sufficient detail to allow the analysis to be adopted in whole or in part by applicants for development permits within the geographic area analyzed in the plan.

The Department of Commerce must prioritize applications for grants to facilitate transit-oriented development that maximize certain policy objectives in the area covered by a proposal, including, among others:

- the total number of housing units authorized for new development;
- the proximity and quality of transit access in the area; and
- plans designed to maximize and increase the variety of allowable housing types and expected sale or rental rates.

Transit access, for purposes of the grants described above, includes walkable access to: light rail and other fixed guideway rail systems; bus rapid transit; high frequency bus service; or park and ride lots.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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