

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6185

As of January 30, 2024

Title: An act relating to adding two voting members that are transit users to the governing body of public transportation benefit areas.

Brief Description: Adding two voting members that are transit users to the governing body of public transportation benefit areas.

Sponsors: Senators Lovelett, Kauffman, Wilson, C., Hasegawa, Kuderer, Nobles and Pedersen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/30/24.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows public transportation benefit areas (PTBAs) to add two voting positions for transit users to their governing boards.
- Requires that of the new positions appointed, one must use transit as their primary transportation mode, and one must represent an organization primarily serving transit users.
- Requires governing bodies to conduct meetings at times and places that are reasonably accessible by transit.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Jenna Forty (786-7755)

Background: Public transportation benefit areas (PTBAs) are a type of municipal corporation structure to provide transit service within a county or a multicounty area. PTBAs are authorized to build and operate transit systems within the specified jurisdiction area, and most commonly operate fixed route services with complementary demand response and vanpool services. The boards of PTBAs are comprised of not more than nine

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elected officials representing cities and counties within the area, and not more than 15 for governing bodies of multicounty areas. PTBAs are also required to have nonvoting members of their governing bodies that must be recommended by labor organizations. The composition of PTBA governing bodies is reviewed every four years. Among the transit agencies in the state, PTBAs are the most common form of governance, comprising 21 of the 32 transit agencies statewide.

Summary of Bill: Governing bodies of PTBAs are authorized to increase board size to 11, or 17 for multicounty areas, if they elect to add two voting positions for transit users. Of the two positions, one must primarily rely on public transportation as their transportation mode, and the second must represent an organization that primarily serves individuals that are transit dependent. In the event that an organization that primarily serves transit dependent individuals does not exist within the PTBA jurisdiction, a second member relying primarily on public transportation systems may be appointed.

Governing bodies are required to conduct meetings at times and places reasonably accessible by transit.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2025.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: It's important for transit dependent people to have a voice on the board. This bill would help close the equity and representation gap, and not only lead to better transit governance, but will help the system work better for all users.

Board compositions of PTBAs are reviewed every four years. Clallam transit wanted to bring transit riders to the board, but current law prohibits it. This bill would allow them to move forward.

OTHER: Transit agencies already engage riders and system users in many ways, through community advisory committees or soliciting rider feedback in proposed changes.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Liz Lovelett, Prime Sponsor; Joe Kunzler; Kristina Sawyckj, Transit Riders Union; Harry Kiick; Amin Tony Hester; Lindsey Schromen-Wawrin, Port Angeles City Councilmember; Guillermo Rogel, Front and Centered; Anna Zivarts, Disability Rights Washington; Kris Colcock.

OTHER: Maureen McCarthy, Whatcom Transportation Authority; Sanjay Bhatt, Kitsap Transit; Chelsea Ongaro, Community Transit.

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