

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESHB 2151

C 318 L 91
Synopsis As Enacted

Brief Description: Revising provisions relating to high capacity transportation systems.

By House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives R. Fisher, G. Fisher, Forner, Mitchell, Prentice, Prince, Paris, Hine, Wood and Horn).

House Committee on Transportation
Senate Committee on Transportation

Background: State law enacted in 1990 made local jurisdictions responsible for high capacity transportation (HCT) system planning, implementation, and operation. A high capacity transportation system is defined as a "system of transportation services operating principally on exclusive rights of way, which taken as a whole, provides a substantially higher level of passenger capacity, speed, and service frequency than traditional public transportation systems operating principally on general purpose roadway rights of way."

Current law prescribes processes for evaluation of HCT systems, one process for the central Puget Sound area and another for other areas of the state. The HCT planning processes include evaluation of a range of transportation options to address capacity needs.

System planning examines transportation goals and projected land use and travel patterns, but does not include selection of a specified mode to address transportation needs. Detailed planning is the examination of a range of options to meet these needs, including doing nothing, low capital and high capital. Detailed planning includes option development, cost and ridership estimates, and environmental impact statement preparation. The various planning processes are to follow the Urban Mass Transit Administration's Alternative Analysis (AA) process to qualify for federal funds.

Planning under these processes is reviewed by a 10-member expert review panel appointed jointly by the governor, the secretary of transportation, and the chair of the Legislative Transportation Committee. These experts are to review the reasonableness of cost estimates, ridership

forecasts, and other planning assumptions, and they provide reports to the appointers and the transit agency conducting the planning. An expert review panel has been reviewing the central Puget Sound HCT planning effort for the past 15 months.

In King, Pierce, Snohomish, Thurston, Clark and Spokane counties, agencies participating in system development are authorized to levy and collect local option taxes to fund HCT systems. These voter-approved taxes consist of an up-to-1 percent sales tax, a 0.8 percent motor vehicle excise tax (MVET) and a \$2/month employer tax. MVET rates must be uniform within all counties which are a party to an HCT agreement.

Before any agency may impose these taxes for HCT, it must comply with the prescribed planning requirements, including expert panel review.

Summary: The definition of high capacity transportation (HCT) system is expanded to include supporting services to an HCT system, including high occupancy vehicle lanes.

A regional HCT implementation program is to include a system plan, a project plan, and a financing plan. A new distinction is drawn between HCT system planning and project planning. System planning is the detailed evaluation of a range of HCT system options, including doing nothing, a low capital investment, and ranges of higher capital investments. The system planning effort is to include estimates of costs, ridership, and service levels, as well as a financing plan.

Project planning is detailed identification of alignments, station locations, equipment and systems, construction schedules, costs and environmental effects.

The expert review panel (ERP) is to oversee the system planning effort rather than the entire project.

The requirement that all planning must be completed before taxes may be imposed is removed. Referral to voters for HCT system funding may occur only after system planning is complete.

Funding from one or more of the authorized local option tax sources may be sought through a single ballot proposition. Voter information requirements, including preparation of a voters pamphlet for the ballot proposition, are set forth. The requirement that motor vehicle excise tax (MVET) rates must be uniform in all counties within a system is repealed.

Language linking land use and HCT development is strengthened, including favoring local jurisdictions with supportive land uses. Language is modified to include objectives and terminology used in the 1990 Growth Management Act.

Technical clean-up of statutes is provided. Contingency language regarding the failure of the central Puget Sound transit agencies to form a joint planning effort or the failure of a ballot proposition is repealed.

The authority for transit agencies to levy local HCT tax options is extended to Kitsap and Yakima counties.

Counties are authorized to develop a process to grant refunds on the \$15 optional county vehicle license fee. These refunds may be granted to vehicle owners 61 years of age or older and whose household income is \$18,000 or less or who have a physical disability.

The prohibition on more than one Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA) per county is modified to permit an area to annex to a PTBA in another county.

If an area within another county is to be added to a PTBA, the county legislative authority governing that area must approve; or, if the area is incorporated, approval of the city legislative authority is required. The make-up of the PTBA legislative authority must be reviewed if an area from another county is added to a PTBA.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	97	1	
Senate	44	0	(Senate amended)
House	94	0	(House concurred)

Effective: July 28, 1991