

VETO MESSAGE ON HB 2615-S

March 27, 1998

To the Honorable Speaker and Members,

The House of Representatives of the State of Washington
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am returning herewith, without my approval as to sections 11, 13 and 14, Engrossed Substitute House Bill No. 2615 entitled: "AN ACT Relating to creating partnerships for strategic freight investments;"

ESHB 2615 creates a Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board to administer grants, targeted at improving freight mobility. This bill is an important step toward solving our state's transportation bottlenecks; however, some sections of the bill are problematic.

Section 11 of ESHB 2615 would require the Department of Transportation (DOT) to make incentive grants to metropolitan planning and regional transportation planning organizations that border Canada, to encourage joint transportation planning activities. While I appreciate the strategic importance of international freight corridors, this section would give superior status to border crossing projects. Section 3 of the bill establishes a level playing field which will allow all freight projects, including those along the Canadian border, to compete for funding on equal terms. Granting priority status for border crossing projects in this instance is not warranted.

Section 13 of ESHB 2615 would require the Governor to personally ensure that this act is "implemented" on its effective date and that the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board convenes by July 1, 1998. Section 4 of the bill already requires that the Board convene by that date. Also, I understand that it is unlikely that the Board will be able to adopt all of its rules within 90 days of the Legislature's adjournment. While I am certainly committed to the rapid, yet thoughtful implementation of this act, the meaning of "implemented" as it appears in this section is very ambiguous and could have unanticipated consequences.

Section 14 of ESHB 2615 would provide that a \$25 million loan from the state general fund to the motor vehicle fund, as provided in ESHB 2894, be used to facilitate freight mobility, but in a very limited way. It would limit the loan's use to only highway construction projects in DOT's highway improvement program. As distinguished from DOT's current highway improvement program, ESHB 2615 is focused legislation intended to create a targeted freight mobility program with the aim of reducing barriers to freight movement with only incidental benefits to general mobility. Linking this money to the highway improvement program is inconsistent with the primary intent of this bill.

For these reasons, I have vetoed sections 11, 13 and 14 of Engrossed Substitute House Bill No. 2615.

With the exceptions of sections 11, 13 and 14, Engrossed Substitute House Bill No. 2615 is approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Gary Locke

Governor