

5765-S

Sponsor(s): Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Prentice, Swecker, Shin, Oke, Parlette, Horn, Haugen and McDonald; by request of The Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation)

Brief Description: Streamlining the environmental permit process for transportation projects.

**SB 5765-S.E - DIGEST**

(AS OF SENATE 2ND READING 4/30/01)

Finds that the public health and safety of its citizens, natural resources, and the environment are vital interests of the state that need to be protected and preserved.

Finds that the safety of the traveling public and the state's economic well-being are vital interests that depend upon the development of cost-effective and efficient transportation systems planned, designed, constructed, and maintained through expedited permit decision-making processes.

Declares an intent to achieve transportation permit reform to expedite the delivery of statewide significant transportation projects through a streamlined approach to environmental permit decision making while improving environmental benefits through a watershed-based approach to aquatic and natural resource management. In order to optimize the limited resources available for transportation system improvements and environmental protection, state regulatory and natural resource agencies, public and private sector interests, Indian tribes, and the department of transportation must work cooperatively to establish common goals, minimize project delays, develop consistency in the application of environmental standards, maximize environmental benefits through coordinated investment strategies, and eliminate duplicative processes through delegation of selected permit drafting and compliance activities between state and federal agencies.

Creates the transportation permit efficiency and accountability committee. The committee must conduct three environmental permit streamlining pilot programs. The committee must also identify and develop general permits and a programmatic consultation process. Finally, the committee must explore other permit streamlining opportunities by designating transportation projects of statewide significance and selected delegation of permit authority.

Directs the committee to select and conduct three permit reform pilot programs.

Provides that the committee must select one permit reform pilot program that includes a mix of projects from each of the following geographic areas: (1) The Translake and I-405 congestion relief study areas to test the application of permit reform to near built-out conditions in urban areas within the Cedar-Sammamish, Duwamish-Green, and other applicable adjoining watersheds agreed to by the committee;

(2) Transportation projects that can be grouped for geographic

permit decision making related to western Washington watersheds and salmon recovery areas for the Willapa, Grays-Elochoman, Lewis, Salmon-Washougal, Wind-White Salmon, Klickitat, and other applicable adjoining watersheds agreed to by the committee; and

(3) Transportation projects that can be grouped for geographic permit decision making related to eastern Washington watersheds and salmon recovery areas for the Walla Walla, Middle Snake, Lower Snake, Rock-Glade, and other applicable adjoining watersheds agreed to by the committee.

Requires the committee and its authorized technical subcommittees to develop a one-stop permit decision-making process that uses interdisciplinary review of transportation projects of statewide significance to streamline and expedite permit decision making. The one-stop permitting process must include early review and coordination between state regulatory agencies and the department in order to develop common environmental goals and strategies, and minimize subsequent changes to conditions.