

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1122

As Reported by House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to transportation governance.

Brief Description: Streamlining transportation governance.

Sponsors: Representatives Morris, Murray and Romero.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/20/03, 1/29/03 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Phases out the Transportation Commission, effective July 1, 2004.
- The Secretary of the Department of Transportation will be appointed by the Governor.
- Moves ministerial functions to the Department of Transportation.
- Requires the Legislative Transportation Committee to make recommendations and develop a transition plan for transferring remaining commission powers.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Murray, Chair; Rockefeller, 1st Vice Chair; Simpson, Vice Chair; Campbell, Clibborn, Cooper, Dickerson, Flannigan, Hankins, Hatfield, Hudgins, Lovick, Morris, Romero, Sullivan, Wallace and Wood.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Ericksen, Ranking Minority Member; Jarrett, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Armstrong, Bailey, Kristiansen, Mielke, Nixon, Schindler and Woods.

Staff: Jeff Doyle (786-7322).

Background:

The Legislature created the Transportation Commission (Commission) in 1977 to govern the Department of Transportation (DOT). The seven-member commission appoints the Secretary of Transportation, proposes transportation legislation and budgets, approves the issuance of bonds for highways, and establishes the policies of the DOT in coordinating transportation planning and administering grants to cities and counties. The Commission has authority to determine ferry fares, tolls, and other charges for use of the transportation system. The Commission is also responsible for development of a state transportation policy plan (20-year plan) that addresses all modes of transportation. Finally, the Commission is tasked with developing transportation system benchmarks under SHB 2304, enacted during the 2002 session.

In 1998 the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation (BRCT) was formed to analyze the state's transportation system and to make recommendations for reform and improvement. The BRCT found that in Washington, more than 468 governmental entities have authority for transportation planning, funding, management and construction of the system. They recommended that a single point of accountability for the state system be designated. To accomplish this, the BRCT recommended that the Secretary of the Washington State Department of Transportation be appointed directly by the Governor, thus making the Governor accountable for the performance of the state transportation system. The BRCT also recommended that the mission of the state Transportation Commission (who previously appointed the Secretary of DOT) be modified to make the Commission responsible for benchmarking and performance measures for the state transportation system.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Secretary of Transportation is appointed directly by the Governor.

The Transportation Commission is phased out. Effective July 1, 2003, the Commission's powers related to oversight of the Department of Transportation (DOT) and for managing the state's transportation assets are transferred directly to the DOT. The Commission's policy, planning, and toll-setting responsibilities remain with the Commission until July 1, 2004. During this interim, the Legislative Transportation Committee (LTC) must conduct a review and analysis of the Transportation Commission's remaining powers and make a recommendation for where these responsibilities are best transferred. The LTC must submit a final report to the Legislature by December 15, 2003.

The Transportation Commission will be dissolved on July 1, 2004.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The Commission's powers related to transportation policy, planning and toll setting would remain with the Commission while the LTC conducts a study of these powers and makes

recommendations regarding the transfer of the powers. Without further legislative action, the Transportation Commission would be dissolved on July 1, 2004.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2004.

Testimony For: This would create a single-point of accountability as envisioned by the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation's recommendations.

Testimony Against: Many of the Transportation Commission's informal roles and functions (such as facilitating agreements among multiple jurisdictions) will be lost. Also, the Commission provides bi-partisan, geographically-diverse oversight of the Department of Transportation's activities.

Testified: (In support) Doug Hurley, Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation; Duke Schaub, Association of General Contractors; and Amber Balch, Association of Washington Businesses.

(With concerns) Aubrey Davis, Transportation Commission; and Peter Thein, Washington State Transit Association.

(Opposed) Paul Locke; and Lisa Kuruvilla.