

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## ESHB 2736

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**As Passed House:**  
February 16, 2004

**Title:** An act relating to transportation governance.

**Brief Description:** Streamlining transportation governance.

**Sponsors:** By House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Murray, G. Simpson, Dickerson, Rockefeller and Wood).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Transportation: 1/22/04, 1/29/04 [DPS].

**Floor Activity:**

Passed House: 2/16/04, 97-1.

**Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill**

- The Secretary of the Department of Transportation will be appointed by the Governor.
- A bipartisan review panel must make recommendations on the disposition of the Transportation Commission's powers.
- The Transportation Commission is scheduled to sunset on October 1, 2005.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Murray, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Simpson, G., Vice Chair; Jarrett, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell, Clibborn, Cooper, Dickerson, Edwards, Hankins, Hatfield, Hudgins, Lovick, Morris, Romero, Shabro, Sullivan, Wallace and Woods.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Ericksen, Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Bailey, Flannigan, Kristiansen, Mielke, Nixon, Rodne and Schindler.

**Staff:** Jeff Doyle (786-7322).

**Background:**

The Legislature created the Transportation Commission (Commission) in 1977 to govern the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). 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 WSDOT 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 WSDOT 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 be modified to make the Commission responsible for benchmarking and performance measures for the state transportation system. However, last session the Legislature created the Transportation Performance Audit Board (TPAB) to conduct performance audits of transportation-related agencies. The Transportation Commission does not have a formal role in this performance audit process.

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**Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill:**

The authority to appoint the Secretary of Transportation is given to the Governor. Appointment of the Secretary is subject to confirmation by the Senate. The Secretary serves at the pleasure of the Governor, and employment may be terminated with or without cause. A bipartisan review panel is directed to make recommendations on the disposition of the duties, functions, and responsibilities of the Transportation Commission. The recommendations must be submitted to the House and Senate by December 3, 2004. The Transportation Commission would be dissolved in October 2005.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except for Section 5, which takes effect on October 1, 2005.

**Testimony For:** None.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Persons Testifying:** None.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.