
Transportation Committee

HB 3096

Brief Description: Financing the state route number 520 bridge replacement project.

Sponsors: Representatives Clibborn and McIntire; by request of Governor Gregoire.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows for the collection of tolls on the existing and replacement State Route 520 (SR 520) Bridge following the submission of the tolling implementation report required by the act and approval by the Legislature.
- Requires the Washington State Department of Transportation to work with the Federal Highways Administration to determine the actions necessary to toll the I-90 Floating Bridge.
- Establishes the State Route 520 Tolling Implementation Committee to evaluate a variety of issues related to the tolling of the SR 520 Bridge.
- Allows state and local sales and use tax applicable to site acquisition, construction, and equipment related to the SR 520 Bridge replacement project to be deferred until five years after the project is open to traffic.

Hearing Date: 1/30/08

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

The State Route 520 (SR 520) Evergreen Point Bridge is a one and a half mile, 42-year-old bridge crossing Lake Washington in King County. The bridge is scheduled for replacement due to its vulnerability to seismic activity and storm events. In addition to the deteriorating physical condition, the bridge lacks shoulders for disabled and emergency vehicles and experiences considerable amounts of congestion.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Legislation passed during the 2007 session directed the Office of Financial Management to hire a mediator and appropriate planning staff to develop a project impact plan for addressing the impacts of the project design on Seattle city neighborhoods and parks, including the Washington park arboretum, and institutions of higher education. The mediator was directed to provide to the Joint Transportation Committee and the Governor a progress report by August 1, 2007, and a final project impact plan by December 1, 2008.

In that same legislation, the project design is described as having six total lanes, with four general purpose lanes and two lanes that are for high occupancy vehicle travel that could also accommodate high capacity transportation, including bus rapid transit. The bridge must also be designed to accommodate light rail in the future.

As a project in the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) proposal, the SR 520 bridge would have received state sales tax paid on the project. This sales tax rebate had been considered as revenue to the project. However, given voters recent rejection of the RTID funding package, a sales tax rebate is no longer available to the SR 520 bridge project. Additionally, the project will not receive \$1.1 billion that would have been provided through the RTID funding package.

In 2007, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) was awarded a grant from the United State Department of Transportation's Congestion Initiative, known as the Lake Washington Urban Partnership. The grant provided \$139 million, of which \$86 million was provided for active traffic management (such as traveler information and speed harmonization) and variable tolling on the SR 520 bridge. All but \$1.6 million of the grant is only accessible once a variable tolling policy has been approved, legal authority exists for tolling to commence, and variable tolling is implemented on the SR 520 bridge project.

Summary of Bill:

A SR 520 Tolling Implementation Committee (Committee) is formed, consisting of three members, the Puget Sound Regional Council Executive Director, the Secretary of WSDOT or his or her designee, and a member of the Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC) from King County. The Committee must evaluate various issues relating to the SR 520 bridge replacement project, including the form the tolling may take, traffic diversion, tolling and traffic management technology, partnership opportunities, and also must survey citizens about the project. A report is due from the Committee to the Governor and Legislature by January 2009.

The WSDOT may begin tolling on the existing SR 520 bridge and its replacement only after the Committee has submitted its report, and after subsequent approval of the Legislature to toll the SR 520 bridges. The WSDOT must work with the Federal Highways Administration to determine what steps would be needed to toll the Interstate 90 bridge. The WSTC must set toll rates and the method of collection.

Payment of state and local sales and use tax applicable to site acquisition, construction, and equipment related to the SR 520 bridge replacement project may be deferred until five years after the project is open to traffic.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.