

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5159

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Transportation, February 28, 2007

**Title:** An act relating to authorizing personal rapid transit and magnetic levitation transit systems.

**Brief Description:** Regarding personal rapid transit and magnetic levitation transit systems.

**Sponsors:** Senator Jacobsen.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Transportation: 2/19/07, 2/28/07 [DPS].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5159 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Marr, Vice Chair; Murray, Vice Chair; Swecker, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Clements, Delvin, Eide, Holmquist, Jacobsen, Kastama, Kauffman, Kilmer, Sheldon and Spanel.

**Staff:** Martha Hankins (786-7429)

**Background:** High Capacity Transportation (HCT) systems provide certain urban areas with greater capacity and speed, and more frequent service, than public transportation systems operating along general purpose roadways. HCT systems include light rail, commuter rail, and monorail. Transit agencies are responsible for planning, construction, and operating HCT systems.

Personal rapid transit (PRT) and magnetic levitation (maglev) systems are two new technologies with potential use as HCT systems.

- PRT systems consist of small pod-like vehicles that carry from two to four people along a guideway.
- Magnetic levitation technology is used to create a frictionless system in which an electromagnetic force propels and guides vehicles over a guideway. A number of high speed maglev systems operate around the world.

PRT and maglev systems do not use existing rail lines: each requires its own, dedicated guideways.

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*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.*

Under current law, only transit agencies in counties meeting certain population conditions may operate HCT systems. These counties may, with voter approval, levy, collect, and dedicate employer and sales and use taxes for HCT projects.

**Summary of Bill:** Provisions related to high-capacity transportation systems are expanded to include magnetic levitation and personal rapid transit systems.

With voter approval by a simple majority, counties are authorized to impose taxes already allowed for other HCT systems to fund maglev and PRT projects.

Counties are authorized to develop public-private partnerships for the purpose of building maglev or PRT systems and are exempt from the population requirements generally needed for HCT.

A grant program, administered by Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), is created for funding maglev and PRT projects. A committee of nine persons will work with WSDOT to set criteria for the grant program. The committee is made up of four members of the House of Representatives, two from each caucus; four Senators, two from each caucus; and a technology expert appointed by the Governor.

**Summary of Proposed Substitute As Heard In Committee (Transportation):** The inclusion of magnetic levitation and PRT is removed from the definition of "high capacity transportation system" and instead the definition of fixed guideway system is expanded to include "systems using various magnetic levitation technologies" and "personal rapid transportation system operating on fixed guideways."

The grant program is removed.

**EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Transportation):** The inclusion of magnetic levitation and PRT is removed from the definition of "high capacity transportation system" and, instead, the definition of fixed guideway system is expanded to include "systems using various magnetic levitation technologies" and "personal rapid transportation systems operating on fixed guideways."

The extension of taxing authority to counties is removed. The exemption for counties implementing maglev or PRT from population requirements is removed. The grant program is removed. Reference to an implementation date is deleted.

No fiscal impact.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** Yes.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: There is more than one type of magnetic levitation technology. Make sure that the definition of maglev is broad enough to include the Magna Force LEVX technology. LEVX uses permanent magnets and does not have an electrified guideway; the federal definition of maglev does not include this technology. The

305 corridor study came to a conclusion about relieving congestion and LEVX is the least expensive option. Funding depends on the definition of maglev including LEVX.

Personal rapid transit systems (PRT) can be three to four times more energy efficient than existing mass transit. PRT systems use small vehicles; therefore, the guideways are lighter and less expensive to build. PRT should be part of the tool box of options under consideration when planning high capacity transit solutions for Washington.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Bill Knobloch, councilmember, Bainbridge Island City Council; Jim Henry, councilmember, Poulsbo City Council; Jo Klinski, Magna Force Inc.; John C. Todd Jr., Sound PRT; Jake Solomon Regional MagLev and PRT Mobility.