

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 1171

As Passed House:
March 3, 2011

Title: An act relating to high capacity transportation system plan components and review.

Brief Description: Concerning high capacity transportation system plan components and review.

Sponsors: Representatives Rolfes, Armstrong, Liias, Billig, Angel, Finn, Appleton, Seaquist and Reykdal.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/20/11, 2/8/11 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/3/11, 54-44.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Limits the required planning process and expert review panel requirement for high capacity transportation systems to systems that include a fixed rail guideway or a bus rapid transit component that is planned by a regional transit authority.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 24 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Billig, Vice Chair; Armstrong, Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Angel, Asay, Eddy, Finn, Jinkins, Johnson, Ladenburg, McCune, Moeller, Moscoso, Overstreet, Reykdal, Rivers, Rodne, Rolfes, Ryu, Shea, Takko, Upthegrove and Zeiger.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Liias, Vice Chair; Fitzgibbon.

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

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.

Background:

In the central Puget Sound region, high capacity transportation (HCT) systems may be established and financed by a regional transit authority (Sound Transit). Outside of the central Puget Sound region, HCT systems may be established by certain transit agencies only in Clark, Spokane, Thurston, Whatcom, and Yakima counties.

High capacity transportation service means a system of public transportation services within an urbanized region operating principally on exclusive rights of way, and the supporting services and facilities necessary to implement the system, including interim express services and high occupancy vehicle lanes, which, taken as a whole, provides a substantially higher level of passenger capacity, speed, and service frequency than traditional public transportation systems operating principally in general purpose roadways.

Transit agencies authorized to provide HCT service may seek to finance the system and service with the following voter-approved revenue measures:

- an employer tax of up to \$2 per month per employee;
- rental car sales and use tax not to exceed 2.172 percent; and
- sales and use tax not to exceed 0.9 percent.

To assure development of an effective HCT system, the local authority must establish a system and financing plan, and must provide for public involvement. In addition, an expert review panel must be appointed to provide independent technical review for development of any plan which is to be funded in whole or part by HCT voter-approved taxes. The state's role in HCT planning is to facilitate cooperative state and local planning efforts, and to provide system and project planning review and monitoring in cooperation with the expert review panel.

In general, most transit agencies, like public transportation benefit areas and county transportation authorities, are authorized to impose a sales and use tax of up to 0.9 percent with voter approval for the purpose of funding public transportation services.

Summary of Engrossed Bill:

The planning process required of local authorities seeking to implement a high capacity transportation system is limited to systems where the plan includes a rail fixed guideway component or a bus rapid transit component that is planned by a regional transit authority, as is the requirement that an expert review panel be appointed to provide independent technical review of the plan.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) For Kitsap Transit and other transit entities around the state, if you are not looking at a HCT system based on light rail but instead at bus rapid transit or other less expensive options, the planning statutes for high capacity transit still have fairly expensive and onerous planning requirements. This bill would exempt bus rapid transit and other options from the requirements of the HCT statutes and would thus provide an incentive for the implementation of these forms of HCT.

Kitsap Transit is halfway through the planning process for bus rapid transit systems on State Routes 303 and 305 under the federal planning requirements, and the state requirements are duplicative. In addition to the Federal Transit Administration process, Kitsap Transit is engaged in regional planning, the state six-year planning process, and the ferry planning process. Kitsap Transit will also be working with the Washington State Department of Transportation's Highways and Ferries Divisions as part of the planning process. It will also have to go to the voters with its plan, and the electorate will hold them to a reasonably high standard as well.

Sound Transit spent around \$3 million on planning for Sound Transit 1 and 2. The planning costs under the HCT statutes for Kitsap Transit's bus rapid transit system would probably be around \$750,000, which is similar to the amount that C-TRAN expects to spend in Clark County.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Dylan Doty and Dick Hayes, Kitsap Transit.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.