

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5128

As of January 13, 2012

Title: An act relating to statewide transportation planning.

Brief Description: Concerning statewide transportation planning.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Haugen, King, White, Swecker, Hobbs and Shin).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/10/11, 2/17/11 [DPS]; 1/12/12.
Passed Senate: 3/25/11, 41-7.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5128 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; King, Ranking Minority Member; Fain, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Delvin, Hill, Hobbs, Litzow, Nelson, Ranker, Sheldon, Shin and White.

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

Background: Various statewide transportation planning requirements, including applicable reporting timelines, exist in state law. These are in addition to the various project-specific plans frequently required in biennial transportation budgets and the self-directed planning conducted within the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT).

For example, every four years the Transportation Commission must prepare a comprehensive and balanced statewide transportation plan and submit it to the Governor and the Legislature. Under the statewide transportation plan, WSDOT is required to develop a statewide multimodal transportation plan, which includes numerous statutorily directed specific modal plans. The statewide multimodal transportation plan must include both a state-owned facilities component and a state-interest component. The state-owned facilities component must consist of both the state highway system plan and the state ferry system plan. The state-interest component includes the specific modal plans, identified as aviation, ports, freight rail, intercity passenger rail, freight mobility, bicycle and pedestrian walkways, and public transportation.

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.

In addition to statewide transportation planning requirements in state law, federal law generally requires states to develop a long-range statewide transportation plan that provides for the development and implementation of a state's intermodal transportation system. Additionally, both state and federal law contain various planning requirements directed at regional and metropolitan transportation planning organizations. Local governments also have various transportation planning functions.

The 2010 supplemental transportation budget directed the Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) to evaluate the preparation of state-level transportation plans. After including a review of federal, state, and regional planning requirements, the evaluation was to make recommendations concerning the appropriate responsibilities for preparation of plans, methods to develop plans more efficiently, and the utility of the state-level planning documents. The evaluation, and accompanying draft legislation, were submitted to the Legislature prior to the start of the 2011 regular legislative session.

Summary of Bill: Various statewide planning requirements are removed from law, including the Transportation Commission's statewide transportation plan requirement and WSDOT's requirement to develop a statewide multimodal transportation plan along with its numerous modal-specific plans. These planning requirements are replaced with one statute requiring an ad hoc planning committee to develop a federally compliant long-range statewide transportation plan.

The planning committee must be convened July 1, 2013, and at least every seven years thereafter. The planning committee must be comprised of one member from each of the following entities: (1) the Transportation Commission, (2) WSDOT, and (3) transportation planning organizations. The Transportation Commission representative must serve as the committee Chair. The committee must adopt a long-range statewide transportation plan that includes various items, including a vision for the development of the statewide transportation system, an incorporation of the statutory transportation system policy goals, integration of various jurisdictional transportation planning, and the involvement of representatives of significant transportation interests. Once adopted, the plan must be submitted to the Governor for submission to the federal government.

Various agency duties are revised as follows: (1) WSDOT must negotiate with applicable entities regarding inconsistencies between various state and regional transportation plans; (2) the Transportation Commission must perform biennial statewide transportation surveys; (3) WSDOT must biennially present its proposed transportation planning and research budget to the Legislature, including various detailed items; and (4) the Governor's proposed biennial transportation budget must track how it relates to the long-range statewide transportation plan.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

Testimony From 2011 Regular Session on Original Bill.

PRO: The current Washington Transportation Plan process recently conducted by the Transportation Commission was very inclusive of various stakeholders and was well received. This bill would build on that successful process. The bill should continue the state plan's connection to Growth Management Act provisions. Regional planning organizations are supportive of this proposal, as it brings them to the table in a more formal manner when establishing the state's transportation plan. The bill makes important efficiencies with respect to state and regional transportation planning.

OTHER: This bill substantially changes existing transportation planning as originally identified. There are many agreed upon common goals the various stakeholders wish to achieve, but WSDOT has concerns with the current bill language. It would be better to revise existing statutes than to repeal them. There are some minimum statutory plans that should be retained, such as the highway system plan, the ferry system plan, the rail plan, and the aviation plan. There should be one federally compliant plan, as identified in the bill, and it should be approved by the Governor. The bike and pedestrian plan should be retained in statute. The least cost planning methodology should be retained and transferred to WSDOT.

Testimony From 2012 Regular Session on Substitute Bill.

PRO: Government should not stop doing transportation planning, but should do it better. Streamlining transportation planning is appropriate. The federal government may change planning requirements with a reauthorization of federal transportation legislation. This bill should not just clean up WSDOT plans, but should also examine local planning requirements. Some minor adjustments may be needed in the bill regarding timelines and references to the appropriate regional planning organizations. The "3-legged stool" approach in the bill works well and adequately represents a "bottoms up" statewide perspective. The bill contains other useful provisions, such as a long-range planning approach, a multi-modal planning approach, and a negotiation process addressing any inconsistent plans.

OTHER: WSDOT agrees with looking at ways to streamline planning, but they must be meaningful and productive. The Department wants to work with all parties involved.

Persons Testifying:

Persons Testifying From 2011 Regular Session on Original Bill.

PRO: Carol Moser, Transportation Commission; Gordon Rogers, Whatcom Council of Governments; Page Scott, Yakima Valley Council of Governments; Charlie Howard, Puget Sound Regional Council; Gary Rowe, WA County Engineers; Ashley Probart, Assn. of WA Cities.

OTHER: Brian Smith, WSDOT; Will Knedlik, Eastside Transportation Assn.; Randi Abrams-Caros, Cascade Bicycle Club.

Persons Testifying From 2012 Regular Session on Substitute Bill.

PRO: Richard Ford, Transportation Commission; Ashley Probart, Assn. of WA Cities; Charlie Howard, Puget Sound Regional Council; Page Scott, Yakima Valley Council of Governments; Gordon Rogers, Whatcom Council of Governments.

OTHER: Dave Dye, WSDOT.