

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1850

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### As Reported by House Committee On: Local Government

**Title:** An act relating to improving the efficiency of conducting certain department of transportation actions by exempting these actions from obtaining local reviews or permits under the shoreline management act.

**Brief Description:** Exempting certain department of transportation actions from local review or permit processes under the shoreline management act.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Hayes, Clibborn, Orcutt, Takko, Harmsworth, Riccelli, Rodne, Bergquist, Wilson, Robinson, Smith, Muri and Magendanz.

#### **Brief History:**

##### **Committee Activity:**

Local Government: 2/12/15, 2/19/15 [DPS].

#### **Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Exempts certain projects and activities of the Department of Transportation, which occur within the right-of-way of state highway facilities, or the leased or owned area of ferry terminals, from requirements to obtain a substantial development permit, a conditional use permit, a variance, a letter of exemption, or other review conducted by a local government to implement the Shoreline Management Act of 1971.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Takko, Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Taylor, Ranking Minority Member; Griffey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Fitzgibbon, McCaslin, Peterson and Pike.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative McBride.

**Staff:** Michaela Murdock (786-7289).

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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.*

## **Background:**

### The Shoreline Management Act of 1971.

The Shoreline Management Act of 1971 (SMA) governs uses of the shorelines of the state. With some exceptions, shorelines include all water areas of the state, the land underlying them, and their associated shorelands. The SMA provides for a cooperative regulatory approach between local governments and the state. At the local level, regulations related to the SMA are developed in mandatory city and county shoreline master programs (SMPs), which regulate land use activities in shoreline areas. At the state level, the Department of Ecology (DOE) is charged with reviewing the locally adopted SMPs for compliance with statutory provisions and agency guidelines.

### Substantial Development Permits.

Prior to undertaking any substantial development on shorelines of the state, the SMA requires a property owner or developer to first obtain a substantial development permit. A "substantial development" is any development with a total cost or fair market value exceeding \$5,000, or any development that materially interferes with the normal public use of the water or shorelines of the state.

Certain types of developments are not considered "substantial developments" under the SMA and are exempt from the requirement to obtain a substantial development permit. For example, normal maintenance or repair of existing structures or developments, including damage by accident, fire, or elements, is not considered a substantial development.

### Letter of Exemption.

Some projects conducted on shorelines of the state require review and approval by federal agencies. The DOE is the coordinating agency for the state with regard to permits issued by the United States Army Corps of Engineers. To facilitate the DOE's coordination of local actions with federal permit review, a local government must prepare a letter of exemption whenever: (1) it determines that a development is exempt from the substantial development permit requirements; and (2) the development is subject to one or more specified federal permit requirements. The letter must indicate the specific exemption and provide a summary of the local government's analysis of the consistency of the project with the local SMP and the SMA.

### Variance or Conditional Use Permits.

Under rules adopted by the DOE, a development or use that is listed as a conditional use pursuant to a local SMP, or is an unlisted use, must obtain a conditional use permit even though the development or use does not require a substantial development permit. When a development or use is proposed that does not comply with the bulk, dimensional, and performance standards of the SMP, such development or use can only be authorized by approval of a variance. Any permit for a variance or conditional use issued with the approval of a local government under its SMP must be submitted to the DOE for approval or disapproval.

### Persons Not Required to Obtain Permits or Variances.

Persons specified in statute are not required to obtain a substantial development permit, conditional use permit, or variance under the SMA. "Person" means an individual,

partnership, corporation, association, organization, cooperative, public or municipal corporation, or agency of the state or local government.

The following persons are exempt under the statute:

- any person conducting remedial action at a facility pursuant to a consent decree, order, or agreed order issued pursuant to the Model Toxic Control Act;
- the DOE conducting remedial action under the Model Toxic Control Act; and
- any person installing site improvements for storm water treatment in an existing boatyard facility to meet applicable permit requirements.

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### **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

Statutory provisions that exempt certain persons from the requirement to obtain a substantial development permit, conditional use permit, or variance under the SMA are modified. In addition to current permit exemptions, persons are also exempted from the requirement to obtain a letter of exemption or other review conducted by a local government to implement the SMA.

Specified projects and activities of the Department of Transportation (DOT) that occur within the right-of-way of state highway facilities or the lease or ownership area for ferry terminals are exempted from the requirement to obtain a substantial development permit, conditional use permit, variance, letter of exemption, or other local government review.

The following DOT projects and activities are exempt:

- maintenance, repair, reconstruction, restoration, or retrofitting of any road, highway, bridge, tunnel, or transit facility, including ancillary transportation facilities; and
- construction or installation of safety structures and equipment, not including new travel lanes or the expansion of transportation facilities.

The exemption does not apply to the construction of a new structure or facility, or expansion of an existing structure or facility, by the DOT.

### **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill removes the replacement of any road, highway, bridge, tunnel, or transit facility as a project or activity that is exempt under the bill from obtaining permits, a letter of exemption, or other local government review. It also establishes that construction of a new structure or facility, or expansion of an existing structure or facility, by the DOT is not exempt from requirements to obtain a substantial development permit, conditional use permit, variance, letter of exemption, or other local government review.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) This bill is based on legislation proposed last year to streamline permitting for state highway maintenance projects. The concept was worked on over the summer and improved. This bill addresses the problem of linear projects that are subject to multiple, different local review processes and permitting requirements. For example, a highway on Camano Island goes through three different jurisdictions and is subject to three different local review processes.

The process for obtaining exemptions varies greatly between jurisdictions. Some jurisdictions provide informal electronic mail or letters with no attached conditions or fees; other jurisdictions require submission of applications, payment of fees, and additional time to review exemptions. This bill will save substantial staff time at the state and local level for work that does not impact the shoreline.

Currently, the DOT must obtain permit exemptions for any work conducted within 200 feet of a shoreline, even if that work is identified as exempt and does not impact the shoreline. Approvals for maintenance work and minor safety upgrades conducted by the DOT within the right-of-way of facilities will be streamlined. Only maintenance, like stripping or resurfacing the roadway, will be exempted, and lane expansions or construction that goes beyond the existing footprint will not be allowed. Although the local review portion of the permit process will be removed, local jurisdictions will still have early input on projects and will not be left entirely out of the loop.

Because of work done by the DOE and the DOT during at least the past 10 years, good standards governing maintenance or replacement of the DOT facilities are in place. For example, the NPDES [National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System] stormwater permits are specifically designed for the DOT, a specific set of standards address water quality and habitat concerns, and other programmatic standards are tailored to the DOT. The DOT is a unique, large agency that puts a lot of emphasis on employing best practice standards and has a large number of staff working on environmental compliance. This bill will not damage the shoreline environment, but rather will help support the state's largest infrastructure, the state highway system.

(Other) Cities are not opposed to the concept proposed in the bill, and appreciate the need to streamline permitting and remove duplicate layers of review. However, additional work with the bill's sponsors is needed to ensure that non-duplicative environmental review processes are not affected or removed by the bill.

(Opposed) Although this bill purports to limit exemptions to vital maintenance and minor safety upgrades, which is fine, it is clear that major projects, such as replacement of bridges and ferry docks, will also be exempt from review. Exempting replacement of a bridge, such as replacement of the 520 bridge, could have major impacts on the environment and state resources. Many replacement projects are more damaging than maintaining the existing structure, because the existing structure must be deconstructed before the replacement can be

built. These are the sorts of projects that need to be permitted and subject to review under the SMA. The SMA is a unique, local program that looks at a range of impacts that other permits do not consider. An amendment to scale back the scope of the bill to exempt only minor projects is appropriate and supported.

Currently, local governments must track projects to determine whether the shoreline master programs are achieving no net loss of shorelines. This bill will exempt projects of the DOT from review, as well prohibit local governments from issuing letters of exemption or conducting other review to determine whether a loss of shoreline has occurred. In Washington, letters of exemption are the method used to secure certification necessary for obtaining certain federal permits. This bill may prevent agencies from obtaining appropriate certifications for federal permitting and funding.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Hayes, prime sponsor; Tom Clingman, Department of Ecology; and Christina Martinez, Department of Transportation.

(Other) Carl Schroeder, Association of Washington Cities.

(Opposed) Bruce Wishart, Sound Action; and Bryce Yadon, Futurewise.

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