

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 1868

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to county road fund purposes for certain counties.

Brief Description: Expanding county road fund purposes for certain counties.

Sponsors: Representatives Lytton and Morris.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government: 2/11/15, 2/18/15 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/4/15, 75-21.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 4/15/15, 46-3.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Authorizes counties that consist entirely of islands and counties with tidally influenced islands to use moneys in the county road fund for marine uses relating to navigation and moorage, and marine facilities, including mooring buoys, docks, and aids for navigation.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Takko, Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Fitzgibbon, McBride and Peterson.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Taylor, Ranking Minority Member; Griffey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin and Pike.

Staff: Michaela Murdock (786-7289).

Background:

In each county, there is a fund known as the county road fund (CRF). Any funds which accrue to the county for use upon the roads must be credited and deposited into the CRF.

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.

The CRF may receive funds from sources such as: (a) levies made by the county legislative authority for the purpose of raising revenue to establish, lay out, construct, alter, repair, improve, and maintain county roads, bridges, and wharves necessary for vehicle ferriage, and other proper county purposes; (b) the motor vehicle fund; and (c) reimbursements by the federal government for expenditures made from the CRF.

Money paid to a CRF may be used for purposes enumerated in statute, such as:

- the construction, alteration, repair, improvement, or maintenance of county roads and bridges;
- wharves necessary for ferriage of motor vehicles;
- ferries;
- acquiring, operating, and maintaining machinery, equipment, quarries, or pits for the extraction of materials;
- the cost of establishing county roads, acquiring rights-of-way, and operating the county engineering office;
- programs directly related to county road purposes, specifically, insurance programs, self-insurance programs, and risk management programs; and
- any other proper county road purpose.

A county road purpose specifically includes construction, maintenance, or improvement of park-and-ride lots, and the removal of barriers to fish passage.

Summary of Engrossed Bill:

Counties that consist entirely of islands and counties that have tidally influenced islands are authorized to use money paid to a CRF for marine facilities, including mooring buoys, docks, and aids to navigation. Additionally, in counties that consist entirely of islands or counties that have tidally influenced islands, county road purposes specifically include marine uses relating to navigation and moorage.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S):

The Senate amendment makes the following changes:

- removes counties that have tidally influenced islands from the bill, thereby limiting application of the bill's provisions to counties that consist entirely of islands;
- specifies which funds in the county road fund may be used for marine uses and facilities. Under the engrossed bill, any moneys paid into the county road fund are authorized to be used for marine facilities, including mooring buoys, docks, and aids to navigation. The Senate amendment instead provides that only certain revenue from real and personal property taxes and tax levies for county roads may be deposited into a subaccount within the county road fund and used for marine facilities, including mooring buoys, docks, and aids to navigation; and
- provides that counties which spend revenues in accordance with provisions of the bill and other applicable law are eligible to receive funds from the rural arterial trust account.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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) Counties are limited in how they are able to use funds, including CRFs. The Legislature must authorize counties to use funding for various purposes, which is why counties often approach the Legislature to ask for spending authority and for clarification as to existing authority. Counties would like greater control over how to use money in the CRF. Counties are not asking for any money from the state, only the ability to decide how to use CRFs at the local level.

For counties with transportation infrastructure that includes more than just pavement and gravel, there are difficulties in accessing CRFs. For example, San Juan County does not have any state roads. It is a county that consists more of water than of land, and residents live on remote islands. Counties like San Juan County consider all passageways, whether road, ferry, or other direct marine travel between islands, to be county modes of transportation. The county wants to expand road access. There are a finite number of resources for maintaining and expanding docks, wharves, and other infrastructure. It is difficult to pay for these transportation options. The county wants to maintain infrastructure, as well as expand it to provide opportunities for people to come to the community and transfer goods and services back and forth. Expanding marine facilities will benefit economic development and provide greater convenience for citizens.

An amendment to the bill would be appreciated by counties with tidally influenced lands. The counties would also like flexibility in how they use their CRFs.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Laura Merrill, Washington State Association of Counties; and Rick Hughes, San Juan County Council.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.