
Postsecondary Education & Workforce Committee

HB 2082

Brief Description: Assessing the needs of the electrical transmission industry.

Sponsors: Representatives Fosse, Low, Fitzgibbon, Berry, Reed, Ramel, Tharinger, Reeves, Paul and Kloba.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Commerce to conduct a study of the employment and workforce education needs of the electrical transmission industry in the state.
- Creates the Electrical Transmission Industry Work Group.

Hearing Date: 1/17/24

Staff: Saranda Ross (786-7068).

Background:

The Department of Commerce (Commerce) is the lead state agency tasked with enhancing and promoting community and economic vitality in Washington. As the agency responsible for growing the state economy, it supports sector leads in areas such as aerospace, agriculture and food manufacturing, clean technology, information and communication technology, the creative economy, forest products, life sciences and biotechnology, maritime, and the military. Sector leads work closely with the Governor, industry heads, and government leaders to develop strategies to support business growth statewide.

Electrical transmission is the movement of large amounts of high-voltage electricity from power

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

plants to places where it is either used directly, such as by large industries, or to substations where the voltage is reduced and the power is distributed to end users such as homes and businesses. The electrical transmission system combined with power plants, distribution systems, and substations form what is known as the electrical grid. The grid meets society's electricity needs and is what gets the electrical power from its generation to its end use.

Summary of Bill:

Commerce must conduct a study of the employment and workforce education needs of the electrical transmission industry in the state. In doing so, Commerce may contract with a third-party entity familiar with conducting similar studies. The purpose of the study is to:

- ascertain labor shortages;
- identify challenges in recruiting, hiring, and retaining workers in certain enumerated trades;
- evaluate workforce succession planning in the industry; and
- assess short-term and long-term training and workforce needs to expand electrical transmission capacity infrastructure to meet the state's climate goals.

The study must focus on line workers, line clearance tree trimmers, and substation technicians. In conducting the study, Commerce or a third-party entity may consult with the Employment Security Department, the Department of Labor and Industries, appropriate centers of excellence, higher education institutions, workforce development centers, utilities, and any other appropriate organizations or entities. To avoid duplication of efforts, Commerce or a third-party entity must coordinate with appropriate agencies and conduct a literature review of ongoing or recent studies, data, or research related to the electrical transmission industry workforce.

Commerce must submit a preliminary report to the Legislature by December 1, 2024, that includes the methodology that will be used to conduct the study and demographic data or other information gathered regarding the electrical transmission industry workforce in preparation for the study. A final report is due to the Legislature by November 1, 2025. At a minimum, the final report must include:

- an inventory of existing training programs and anticipated need for expansion of existing or additional training programs to meet current and future workforce needs;
- the number of line workers, line clearance tree trimmers, and substation technician apprentices;
- demographic data, such as age of the workforce;
- identification of gaps and barriers to a full electrical transmission workforce pool including, the loss of workers to retirement in the next five, 10, and 15 years, and other current and anticipated retention issues;
- a comparison of wages between different jurisdictions in the state and between other neighboring states, including incentives offered by other states;
- any data on the number of line workers, line clearance tree trimmers, and substation technicians that completed training in the state and left to work in a different state;
- data on the number of out-of-state workers who enter the state to meet workforce needs on large scale electrical transmission projects;

- key challenges that could emerge in the foreseeable future based on factors such as growth in demand for electricity and changes in energy production and availability; and
- recommendations for the training, recruitment, and retention of the current and anticipated electrical transmission workforce.

Commerce must convene an Electrical Transmission Industry Work Group (Work Group) for the purpose of providing advice, developing strategies, and making recommendations on supporting the needs of the electrical transmission industry workforce and the state's climate goals. The Work Group must periodically review the status of electrical transmission workforce issues and provide ongoing recommendations regarding the needs and challenges of the industry to the Legislature, state and local agencies, labor, and utilities.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 10, 2024.

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