
Transportation Committee

SSB 6316

Brief Description: Concerning the state route number 520 corridor.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Pedersen and King).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Removes the limitation on where tolls may be imposed on the State Route (SR) 520 Corridor.
- Authorizes the Washington State Department of Transportation to apply for a state and local sales and use tax deferral related to the construction of the SR 520 Corridor Improvements—West End Project.

Hearing Date: 3/5/24

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

Toll Authorization and Rate Setting.

The Legislature is the only entity with the authority to authorize tolls on an eligible toll facility. An eligible toll facility is portions of the state highway system specifically identified by the Legislature, including transportation corridors, bridges, crossings, interchanges, on-ramps, off-ramps, approaches, bistate facilities, and interconnections between highways. The Legislature has authorized collection of tolls on the following facilities:

- the Tacoma Narrows Bridge;
- the State Route (SR) 99 tunnel;
- the new sections of SR 167 and SR 509 that are part of the Puget Sound Gateway Project;
- the SR 167 express toll lanes;

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- the Interstate 405 express toll lanes; and
- the Interstate 5 (I-5) bridge replacement project.

The Legislature has designated the Washington State Transportation Commission (Commission) as the state tolling authority with responsibility for setting toll rates, including variable pricing, and reviewing toll operations. Before each regular session of the Legislature, the Commission must report to the transportation committees of the Legislature on any increase or decrease in toll rates approved by the Commission.

State Route 520 Corridor—Tolling.

In 2009 the Legislature authorized the initial imposition of tolls on the SR 520 Corridor, defined as SR 520 between I-5 and SR 202, to be charged only for travel on the floating bridge portion of the corridor, which is part of the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) project. The finance plan for the project included a deferral of the sales taxes paid on construction of the project.

State Route 520 Corridor—Sales and Use Tax Deferral.

State and local sales and use tax due on site acquisition, construction, and equipment related to the SR 520 Corridor and HOV project may be deferred until the 24th calendar year after the project is operationally complete, when the replacement floating bridge is constructed and open to traffic, and is then due in equal yearly installments over the next decade. These payments are currently scheduled to begin by the end of 2041 since the replacement floating bridge was operationally complete and opened to traffic in August 2017.

State Route 520 Corridor Improvements—West End Project.

The SR 520 Corridor Improvements—West End Project is intended to replace the Portage Bay Bridge with a seismically resilient structure that includes improved bus and carpool travel and an extension of the SR 520 Trail. The project is also intended to build a landscaped lid between Seattle's Roanoke Park and North Capitol Hill neighborhoods.

Summary of Bill:

The limitation of only imposing tolls on the floating bridge portion of the SR 520 Corridor is removed.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) may apply for a state and local sales and use tax deferral on site acquisition, construction, and equipment related to the SR 520 Corridor Improvements—West End Project, which completes corridor improvements between I-5 and the west high rise. Such sales and use tax may be deferred until the 24th calendar year after the project is operationally complete. The project is operationally complete when the WSDOT notifies the Department of Revenue in writing that all projects qualifying for a deferral within the west end project are operationally complete. New deferral certificates may not be issued once the project is operationally complete.

The new sales and local sales and use tax deferral option is exempted from the requirements related to tax preference expiration and performance statements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2024.