

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1418

As Reported by House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to adding two voting members that are transit users to the governing body of public transportation benefit areas.

Brief Description: Adding two voting members that are transit users to the governing body of public transportation benefit areas.

Sponsors: Representatives Timmons, Ramel, Duerr, Simmons, Parshley, Reed, Doglio, Pollet, Hill and Donaghy.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/27/25, 2/6/25 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Allows for the appointment of two transit-using members to the governing body of public transportation benefit areas (PTBAs) as voting members.
- Requires one of the transit-using members to represent a community-based organization, if possible.
- Requires meetings of the governing body of certain PTBAs to be reasonably accessible by transit and that certain trainings be provided to transit-using members.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 23 members: Representatives Fey, Chair; Bernbaum, Vice Chair; Donaghy, Vice Chair; Reed, Vice Chair; Barkis, Ranking Minority Member; Low, Assistant Ranking

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Minority Member; Mendoza, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Schmidt, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bronoske, Dent, Duerr, Entenman, Hunt, Klicker, Nance, Paul, Ramel, Richards, Stuebe, Taylor, Timmons, Wylie and Zahn.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Orcutt and Volz.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Griffey and Ley.

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

Public Transportation Benefit Area.

A public transportation benefit area (PTBA) is a type of municipal corporation created to provide regional transportation service to all or a portion of a county or multiple counties.

It is authorized to construct, own, and operate a regional transportation system within its jurisdictional boundaries, in accordance with specified statutory requirements. The creation of a PTBA requires the convening of a public transportation improvement conference attended by an elected official from each city and county falling within the jurisdiction of the proposed PTBA.

In total, there are 32 transit systems in Washington, operating under one of six different governance structures. Of these 32 systems, 21 are operating as PTBAs.

Governance.

The governance of a PTBA is provided by a governing body consisting of not more than 9 (or 15 if the PTBA is multicounty) elected officials from the governments of the cities and counties participating in the PTBA. A PTBA must also include in its governing body a nonvoting member recommended by the labor organization or organizations representing its employees, if the authority has employees represented by a labor union.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The requirements for the governing body of a PTBA are modified to allow for the appointment of two transit-using members to the governing body of PTBAs, as voting members. One of the transit-using members must represent a community-based organization and at least occasionally use public transportation, if possible, and the other must primarily rely on public transportation. If no organizational representative residing within the PTBA's service area is available to serve, a second member who is primarily reliant on public transportation must be appointed instead.

Transit-using members must be provided comprehensive training regarding the Open Public

Meetings Act, the Public Records Act, and ethics for municipal officers, as soon as is reasonably practicable after the member's appointment.

The meetings of the governing body of a PTBA, which has transit-using members of the governing body, must occur at a time and place that is reasonably accessible by transit.

The ability to appoint transit-using members to the governing body of a PTBA does not apply to any PTBA where there are retained citizen positions on the governing body, which were in existence at the time the PTBA assumed public transportation functions previously provided under the Interlocal Cooperation Act.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill requires the transit-using member representing a community-based organization to at least occasionally use public transportation and both transit-using members to be provided training regarding ethics for municipal officers.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2026.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Transit plays a critical role in our communities across the state, helping folks get to school, get to the grocery store, and get to work. Transit riders have unique experience, unique perspectives, and expertise that can help transit boards in making decisions that impact transit ridership and routes.

This legislation is meant to enhance the current process by giving local transit boards the option of appointing transit riders to their boards, to help enhance decision making. It's completely voluntary. It's a local decision, and the board would appoint two people to keep an odd number on these boards, one who's a transit rider or dependent on transit and one who represents an organization that works with folks who are dependent on transit.

The governing bodies for transit agencies are filled by local elected officials, many of whom may not ride transit. Those governing bodies can be enhanced by the experience of folks who utilize that service, and that's what this bill is trying to do.

This bill will allow those who take transit to be heard and responded to, by the boards and staffs who govern transit. Transit boards need to be inclusive and receptive to rider input. Transit riders should be on these boards, so they can place items on the board agenda that

are of serious concern to transit riders. Federated boards do not have the appropriate level of accountability today because it's hard to get the media to care and write stories that make a difference.

Transit service can be improved by including people who rely on transit as part of the decision-making process. This bill also provides a way to cultivate future leaders both in the transit agencies and in transportation policy.

Intercity Transit wanted to have transit rider representation on their board, and they had to go to the Legislature. They spent a couple of years lobbying to get citizen representation re-added to their board structure. People start out as citizen Advisory Committee members and are often then appointed to the board as voting members. It's also a leadership capacity training program, and it helps Intercity Transit really connect with community members and make sure their service is responding to the needs of community.

Involving the community on the boards as active board members means that, in the long-haul, you're going to see community buy-in and a big groundswell of support for transit riders. You're involving them in the decision-making process, as is appropriate, rather than just allowing them to only make recommendations through a community advisory board.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) It is encouraging to see consideration of ways to improve transit agency governance. Current state law grants transit agencies broad authority, including taxing authority that generates several billion dollars per year, but that authority and autonomy is not matched by a requirement for any accountability.

The federated structure of transit benefit area boards means the public doesn't have a direct vote on who represents them, and adding more appointed members who aren't even elected officials will further weaken agency accountability. As proposed, this bill would provide no opportunity for transit district residents to run for these new positions, or even to vote for or against the people who are chosen.

Right now, transit agencies are wrestling with tough problems, especially rising costs and ridership that is still below pre-covid levels. To help address those very serious challenges, transit boards should be made more accountable and more responsive to the public, not more insulated from their constituents.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Joe Timmons, prime sponsor; Joe Kunzler; Anna Zivarts, Disability Rights Washington; and Judy Jones.

(Other) Charles Prestrud, Washington Policy Center.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: Jamin Mason.