

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2134

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### As Reported by House Committee On:

Transportation

**Title:** An act relating to regional transportation plans, of regional transportation planning organizations containing certain counties, providing for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled.

**Brief Description:** Concerning regional transportation plans, of regional transportation planning organizations containing certain counties, providing for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Duerr, Reed, Parshley, Ryu, Ramel, Doglio, Fitzgibbon, Zahn and Gregerson.

### Brief History:

#### Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/19/26, 1/28/26 [DPS].

#### Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the regional transportation plans of certain regional transportation planning organizations to provide for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled.

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## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 16 members: Representatives Fey, Chair; Bernbaum, Vice Chair; Donaghy, Vice Chair; Reed, Vice Chair; Bronoske, Duerr, Entenman, Hackney, Hall, Nance, Paul, Ramel, Richards, Timmons, Wylie and Zahn.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Low, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Schmidt, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Engell, Griffey,

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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 part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

Klicker, Ley, Orcutt and Volz.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Barkis, Ranking Minority Member; Mendoza, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dent and Stuebe.

**Staff:** David Munnecke (786-7315).

**Background:**

A Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) is a voluntary association of local governments within a county, or within geographically contiguous counties. An RTPO is required to prepare a regional transportation plan (Plan), among other duties. An RTPO can cover both urban and rural areas and receives state funding in support of its planning efforts. There are currently 16 RTPOs, which cover 38 of Washington's 39 counties.

The RTPOs must prepare and update a Plan, in cooperation with the Washington State Department of Transportation, transportation providers, local governments, and other specified entities. In addition to satisfying other requirements, the Plan must:

- be based upon a least-cost planning methodology;
- identify existing or planned transportation facilities, services, and programs;
- establish regional level of service standards for qualifying highways and ferry routes;
- include a financial plan; and
- assess regional development patterns, capital investments, and other measures to ensure the preservation of the regional transportation system.

The Plan must also set forth a proposed regional transportation approach, including capital investments, service improvements, programs, and transportation demand management measures to guide the development of an integrated, multimodal regional transportation system. All transportation projects, programs, and demand management measures within the region must be consistent with the Plan and adopted regional growth and transportation strategies.

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The Plans of certain RTPOs are required to provide for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled (VMTs). The requirement applies to RTPOs that contain a county or counties meeting one or more of the following criteria in RCW 36.70A.095, which establishes certain planning requirements under the Growth Management Act (GMA), on or after April 1, 2021:

- a county with a population density of at least 100 people per square mile and a population of at least 200,000;

- a county bordering the Columbia and Snake Rivers with a population density of at least 75 people per square mile and an annual growth rate of at least 1.65 percent; or
- a county located to the west of the crest of the Cascade Mountains with a population of at least 130,000.

The requirement currently applies to Benton, Clark, King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish, Spokane, Skagit, Thurston, Whatcom, and potentially Franklin counties.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

As compared to the original bill, the substitute bill removes the criteria for determining which RTPOs must provide for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and VMTs in their Plans, and replaces them with the following criteria in RCW 36.70A.095, which are identical except for the addition of the timeframe, of on or after April 1, 2021, for the application of the criteria:

- a county with a population density of at least 100 people per square mile and a population of at least 200,000;
- a county bordering the Columbia and Snake Rivers with a population density of at least 75 people per square mile and an annual growth rate of at least 1.65 percent; or
- a county located to the west of the crest of the Cascade Mountains with a population of at least 130,000.

The substitute bill also establishes that if a county is included in two RTPOs, the inclusion of reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and VMTs in a regional transportation plan only applies to the RTPO with the larger population.

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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 requires that certain RTPOs plan for the reduction of greenhouse gases and VMTs in their transportation planning. This bill only impacts those RTPOs that have a county subject to the GMA climate element.

There are 11 in total, and these are the fastest growing and largest counties in the state. This bill ensures that the Plans are aligned with the local comprehensive plans in these jurisdictions, creating consistency among governments and outcomes.

The state has greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and VMT reduction targets, and this bill enables Plans to assist in achieving these targets. It is fundamentally about consistency in transportation planning and achieving goals. Growth management plans are supposed to be consistent from city, to county, to Plans.

Transportation is Washington's largest source of climate pollution, and the state's climate goals cannot be met without considering greenhouse gas emissions and VMTs at all levels of transportation planning.

Regional Transportation Planning Organizations are on the front lines of making these decisions. Many RTPOs already do strong, practical, important work, coordinating across counties and cities, and play a critical role in balancing regional transportation needs and navigating the distinct challenges of rural and metropolitan areas.

House Bill 2134 strengthens that work by setting clear planning expectations and respecting local and regional decision-making. This type of very clear expectations will create space for frequent and reliable transit, safe walking and biking, and coordinated land use that reduces the need to drive in the first place.

All of these things use road funding, so planning for this work does not necessarily mean taking money away from important road investments. It means planning for how to make those roads safer for all users in the long run. This bill does not mandate projects or take away local control. It asks Plans to plan responsibly.

In Eastern Washington, transportation planning determines whether people can get to work without a car, whether seniors can safely cross the street, and whether families are forced to spend more of their income just to meet daily needs.

Transportation is the largest source of climate pollution in Washington, which means the way people plan regionally matters for both household budgets and long-term resilience. In Spokane, the Spokane Regional Transportation Council brings together cities, counties, the transit agency, STA, freight interests, and the public to plan across jurisdictional lines. That collaborative regional approach is essential in a place like Spokane, where urban neighborhoods, small towns, and rural areas are deeply connected.

By asking RTPOs to look directly at greenhouse gas emissions and VMTs, it ensures regional plans are honest about the impacts of the choices they make. That kind of clarity helps regions prioritize investments that reduce congestion over time, manage costs, and expand practical options like transit, safe walking and biking, and coordinated land use.

House Bill 2134 supports smarter planning, better coordination, and transportation systems that serve people.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) Requiring VMT reduction targets and regional planning efforts could effectively bias local transportation funding toward alternative and lesser-used modes of travel at the expense of traditional road funding.

Washington already underfunds road preservation by an estimated \$1 to \$1.5 billion per year, and recent resiliency challenges from severe weather to increase system stress have underscored the consequences of deferred maintenance.

The Legislature should consider how to prioritize maintaining and preserving transportation assets to ensure safety, reliability, and long-term economic competitiveness.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Davina Duerr, prime sponsor; Bryce Yadon, Futurewise; Katy Ricchiuto, Transportation Choices Coalition; and Erik Lowe, Spokane Reimagined.

(Other) Mike Ennis, Icon Materials.

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