

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4001

As Reported by House Committee On:
Transportation

Brief Description: Concerning Russ Blount memorial bridge naming.

Sponsors: Representatives Fey, Dufault and Barkis.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/23/25, 1/29/25 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Joint Memorial

- Requests the Washington State Transportation Commission to commence proceedings to name the future 34th Avenue East overpass in the city of Fife as the "Russ Blount Memorial Bridge" to honor Russell Blount as a leader in transportation in Washington State, Pierce County, and the City of Fife.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 25 members: Representatives Fey, Chair; Bernbaum, Vice Chair; Donaghy, Vice Chair; Reed, Vice Chair; Barkis, Ranking Minority Member; Low, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Mendoza, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Schmidt, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bronoske, Dent, Duerr, Griffey, Hunt, Klicker, Ley, Nance, Orcutt, Paul, Ramel, Richards, Stuebe, Taylor, Timmons, Volz and Wylie.

Staff: Christine Thomas (786-7142)

Background:

State Highway Facility Naming.

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.

The Washington State Transportation Commission (Commission) is responsible for naming state transportation facilities, including state highways, bridges, rest areas, and other state highway facilities. The Commission's policy states, "A naming is done in a thorough and deliberative manner to honor and institute an enduring memory of a person or group of people who have contributed significantly to the well-being of the state or nation, and with the widespread support of the people from the area in which the facility is located."

For the Commission to consider a proposal, the requesting entity must provide sufficient evidence indicating community support and acceptance of the proposal. This evidence can include a letter of support from the state or federal legislator representing the area encompassing the facility to be renamed. Other evidence that can provide proof of community support includes a resolution passed by other elected bodies in the impacted area, support from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and supportive action from a local organization such as a chamber of commerce.

If a naming request is submitted for a person who has recently died, the Commission does not act on the request for at least 12 months after the date of passing to allow for a respectful period of mourning and reflection.

Upon passage of a joint memorial requesting the naming of a facility, the Commission holds a public hearing prior to taking action. After the Commission takes final action in naming a state transportation facility, the WSDOT designs and installs the appropriate signs. If the facility is a bridge, the Regional Administrator at the WSDOT region in which the bridge is located provides a description of the bridge and its location to the State Bridge and Structures Preservation Engineer.

Russell Blount.

Russell (Russ) Blount was born December 16, 1958. He served the City of Fife (Fife) for 20 years from 2002 until his untimely passing in October 2022. He served 17 years as the Public Works Director and then later as Deputy City Manager and Interim City Manager. He was well regarded by his community and was known for his dedication to Fife and interests in transportation. He served on committees for transportation infrastructure including the Puget Sound Gateway project and Sound Transit's Tacoma Dome Link Extension. He also provided staff support to elected officials on transportation issues, and helped secure state and federal grant funding to advance major transportation projects in Fife and the region.

Summary of Substitute Joint Memorial:

The memorialists, with the support of the City of Fife, the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce, the Port of Tacoma, Pierce County, and the Regional Access Mobility Partnership partners, requests that the Commission commence proceedings to name the future 34th Avenue East overpass in the city of Fife as the "Russ

Blount Memorial Bridge" to honor Russ Blount as a leader and public servant in transportation in Washington, Pierce County, and the City of Fife.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute joint memorial replaces references to the former Secretary of the WSDOT with references to the current Secretary of the WSDOT and corrects a typographical error.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Mr. Blount was a tremendous contributor to the state's and city of Fife's transportation system. It was shocking and unexpected to hear of Russ Blount's untimely death in October of 2022. Mr. Blount dedicated himself to all endeavors both personally and professionally. As a career public servant, he was committed to working collaboratively and making connections to solve complex problems. As the Public Works Manager for the City of Fife, he engaged all impacted groups of particularly challenging problems to create sustainable solutions. Mr. Blount was considered a well-respected transportation leader, advisor, mentor, and friend. Naming this bridge after him would be a fitting tribute to his several years of public service to the City of Fife, the region, and the state.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Jake Fey, prime sponsor; Debra Blount; and Kim Roscoe.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.