

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2557

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Parks & Shorelines, February 25, 2002

Title: An act relating to metropolitan park districts.

Brief Description: Revising provisions relating to metropolitan park districts.

Sponsors: House Committee on Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Lovick, Sump, Doumit, Buck, O'Brien, Pearson, Rockefeller, Ogden, McDermott, Mitchell, Boldt, Ericksen, Morell, Kenney and Jackley).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Parks & Shorelines: 2/21/02, 2/25/02 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, PARKS & SHORELINES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Chair; Poulsen, Vice Chair; Hargrove, Morton, Oke, Snyder and Spanel.

Staff: Kari Guy (786-7437)

Background: Cities of 5,000 or more population may create a metropolitan park district for the management and acquisition of parks and boulevards. To create the district, the city must submit the proposition to the voters. The ballot proposition may be initiated by the city legislative authority or by petition of 15 percent of registered voters. At the same election determining creation of the district, five park commissioners are elected. One metropolitan park district, the Metropolitan Park District of Tacoma, currently exists in the state.

A metropolitan park district may impose two separate regular property tax levies on all property located in the district: (1) a levy not to exceed \$0.50 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation; and (2) a levy not to exceed \$0.25 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. The metropolitan park district board may levy a property tax in excess of the regular property tax levy with approval of the voters. The metropolitan park district levies are subject to the constitutional 1 percent limitation on property taxes that applies to all taxing district levies.

The Legislative Task Force on Local Parks and Recreation recommended changes to establishment and operation of metropolitan park districts to encourage more local governments to form metropolitan park districts.

Summary of Amended Bill: Any city or county, or combination of cities and counties, may create a metropolitan park district. The ballot proposition must be submitted to the voters of the area proposed for inclusion in the metropolitan park district after each county or city legislative authority enacts a resolution to create the district.

The metropolitan park board may be composed in any of the following alternatives:

- Five commissioners may be elected at the same election creating the district;
- For a district located entirely within one city or the unincorporated area of one county, the legislative authority of the city or county may act as the metropolitan park board; or
- For a district located in multiple cities or counties, each legislative authority may appoint one or more members to serve as the board.

The ballot proposition must clearly describe the composition of the board of commissioners of the proposed district. The governing structure of an existing metropolitan park district may not be changed without the approval of the voters. Only separately elected metropolitan park commissioners are entitled to receive compensation.

The proration schedule for property taxes is amended. When junior taxing district levies must be reduced or eliminated to fit within the debt limit, new metropolitan park districts must be reduced before fire districts, libraries, or public hospital districts.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The amended bill requires that the composition of the governing board of the proposed metropolitan park district must be clearly stated on the ballot, and that the governing structure of existing metropolitan park districts may not be changed without approval of the voters. The amendment also specifies that only separately elected metropolitan park commissioners may receive compensation for performing their duties. The proration schedule for property taxes is amended, so that metropolitan park district levies for park districts created after January 1, 2001, are reduced or eliminated before fire districts, libraries, or the first 50 cents of the public hospital levy are affected.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill provides local communities with another choice for funding operation and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities. District formation is voter approved, and commissioners have some independence from the pressure of other government needs. Some minor changes are needed to clarify that the existing metropolitan park district in Tacoma will not be affected by the bill.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: T.K. Bentler, Metro Parks, Tacoma; Don Williams, WA Rec. & Park Assn. (pro).