
Transportation Committee

ESSB 5457

Brief Description: Providing a congestion reduction charge to fund the operational and capital needs of transit agencies.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators White, Shin, Murray, Kohl-Welles, Harper, Nelson, Keiser, Prentice, Kline and McAuliffe).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Allows the governing body of counties that have assumed the authority of a metropolitan municipal corporation to impose, upon a two-thirds majority approval by the governing body or majority approval by the voters, a congestion reduction charge for certain vehicles of up to \$20, until June 30, 2014, or two years after imposition, unless the charge was approved by a majority of the voters in the county.
- Requires a governing body that imposes a congestion reduction charge to complete a congestion reduction plan prior to implementation, complete two reports detailing the expenditures of the congestion reduction charge, and expend the proceeds of the charge in a manner consistent with the recommendations of any regional task force created by the governing body.

Hearing Date: 3/15/11

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

There are 31 public transit systems operating in the state. Public transit systems are special purpose districts authorized to provide public transportation services within their respective boundaries. These transit systems can be formed under a variety of different governance structures, including public transportation benefit areas (PTBAs), metropolitan municipal corporations (Metros), county transportation authorities, city-owned transit systems, and regional transit authorities.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Generally speaking, "public transportation service" means the transportation of packages, passengers, and their incidental baggage by means other than by chartered bus or sight-seeing bus, together with the terminals and parking facilities necessary for passenger and vehicular access to and from such systems. For PTBAs, "public transportation service" also includes passenger-only ferry service for those PTBAs eligible to provide passenger-only ferry service.

To fund capital and operating public transportation expenses, public transit systems are authorized to seek voter approval of up to 0.9 percent in sales and use tax. Most transit systems may also seek voter approval of a business and occupation tax and a household tax in lieu of a sales and use tax. Fares may be set and increased by the transit agency's governing body without voter approval.

Summary of Bill:

The governing body of a county that has assumed the authority of a metropolitan municipal corporation and is operating a public transportation system (authorized governing body) may impose, upon a two-thirds majority approval by the authorized governing body or majority approval by the voters of the county, a congestion reduction charge for certain vehicles of up to \$20. The congestion reduction may be collected until June 30, 2014, or two years after imposition, whichever comes first.

The congestion reduction charge is due upon the registration renewal date for each vehicle subject to vehicle license fees and each vehicle subject to gross weight fees with an unladen weight of 6,000 pounds or less, except for farm vehicles, off-road vehicles, nonhighway vehicles, vehicles registered as apportionable vehicles, and snowmobiles.

Prior to imposing a congestion reduction charge, an authorized governing body must complete a congestion reduction plan detailing the proposed expenditures of the proceeds of the charge. Authorized governing bodies that impose a congestion reduction charge must also complete reports by July 1, 2012, and June 1, 2014, detailing the expenditures of the proceeds of the congestion reduction charge. If an authorized governing body that imposes a congestion reduction charge has completed a regional task force evaluating system improvements and efficiencies within two years of the imposition of the charge, the proceeds of the charge must be expended in a manner consistent with the recommendations of the task force.

An authorized governing body may impose a congestion reduction charge after June 30, 2014, if the charge is approved by a majority of the voters in the county, but the authority to impose a congestion reduction charge expires December 31, 2014. An authorized governing body may not impose a congestion reduction charge for a passenger-only ferry transportation improvement unless the charge is approved by a majority of the voters within the system's jurisdiction.

An authorized governing body that chooses to impose a congestion reduction charge must contract with the Department of Licensing (DOL) for collection, and must provide the DOL with any information specified by the DOL as necessary for the collection of the congestion reduction charge. The DOL must also deduct a percentage amount, as provided in the contract, necessary to reimburse the DOL for its collection costs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.