

Weekly Legislative Update: **Transportation**

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Overview

The supplemental Transportation budgets released by the House and Senate include quite different proposed updates. In particular, the House budget has included:

- \$30 million for zero-emission vehicle grants for the deployment of alternative fuel vehicle charging and refueling infrastructure on state highways;
- \$ 5 million for a Zero Emission Vehicle Access Program (ZAP) for clean fuel car share grants to low-income communities and communities not currently served with transit options;
- \$63.2 million for public transportation, including \$23 million for expansion of green transportation and \$11.2 million for regional mobility; as well as a number of smaller proposed appropriations in this category;
- \$51.5 million in capital budget increases as well as \$28.9 million in operating budget increases for the ferry system;
- \$500,000 each for Amtrak Cascades, integration of Amtrak Cascades Service Development Plans for Washington State and Oregon to create a corridor plan for investments over the next 20 years as part of the federal Corridor Identification and Development Program; and Cascadia High-Speed Rail Service Development Plan for a new high-speed rail corridor connecting Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver, BC; and
- \$31.4 million for grants to school districts to transition from diesel school buses and other student transport vehicles to zero-emission vehicles and related infrastructure.

The Senate budget has included:

- \$1 million for highway safety speed cameras;
- \$4 million for Wrong-Way Driving Prevention Strategies;
- \$33.2 million for a variety of public transportation projects;
- \$270.8 million for ferry system capital projects and \$31.9 million for a variety operation projects;
- \$10 million for rail operations;

Neither included the projects League has supported, such as a new Office for Rail; and work to create improvements in passenger rail service.

Bills That Have Passed the House of Origin

HB 2356/SB 6115 Concerning speed safety camera systems. This bill would address administration, penalty structure, and enforcement of speed safety camera system violations in state highway work zones. It would require WSDOT to create a website to educate the traveling public about the operation of speed safety camera systems in state highway work zones. The prohibition on driving a vehicle in a state highway work zone at speeds greater than allowed would be made clear. Warnings would be issued for the first violation but fines would apply for subsequent events. **HB 2356** passed the House on a vote of 97 to 0, with 1 excused. It has been referred to the Senate Transportation Committee but not scheduled for public hearing so has died. **SB 6115 passed the Senate with a vote of 40 to 8. It is scheduled for executive session in the House Transportation Committee on Monday, February 26.** *Note that the Senate Transportation budget included funding for this.*

SB 6277 Creating a new statutory framework for the use of public-private partnerships for transportation projects would amend the Transportation Innovative Partnership Program (TIP) to transparently deliver better public value, change financing arrangements, and more, and put these projects under the responsibility of WSDOT. **This bill passed the Senate with a vote of 48 to 1 and is now scheduled for executive session in the House Transportation Committee on Monday, February 26.**

SHB 1368 Requiring and funding the purchase of zero emission school buses. This is a high priority for the League. **HB 1368** would mandate acquisition of zero-emission buses for school transport with technical and financial support from OSPI and Ecology, which would reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as reduce health risks to children who ride the buses. **This bill passed the House on a vote of 58 to 39 and is scheduled for public hearing in the Senate Ways & Means Committee on Saturday, February 24.**

HB 2160 Promoting community and transit-oriented housing development. These bills would make a number of changes to regulatory requirements to facilitate more development of multi-family housing near transit facilities. The original bill prohibited minimum parking requirements in these transit-oriented development areas, but that provision was removed in the most recent substitute bill. The intention had been to encourage transit use by reducing parking capacity. **This bill passed the House with a vote of 56 to 40 and is scheduled for public hearing in the Senate Ways & Means Committee on Saturday, February 24.**

Bills We Are Following (cont'd on next page)

SB 5494 Providing incentives to improve freight railroad infrastructure would create various taxing opportunities and exemptions and credits for railroad maintenance, modernization, and new construction on short line railroad tracks. This bill had a public hearing in the Senate Ways & Means committee but has not moved forward to date.

Bills That Have Died

HB 1428, companion bill to **SSB 5383** Concerning pedestrians crossing and moving along roadways, has not changed status since the beginning of session and is dead, since it did not have any committee action by the cutoff on February 5.

HB 2456/SB 6237 Ensuring connectivity for Washington wildlife through safe passages. This bill requires WSDOT to negotiate an MOU with the Department of Fish and Wildlife to establish connectivity that would allow safer migration of many animals and avoid the extensive damages and costs that are now incurred from vehicles colliding with wildlife. **HB 2456** was referred to the House Rules Committee but that committee referred it back to the House Appropriations Committee where it died. **SB 6237** moved from the Senate Transportation Committee to the Senate Ways & Means Committee and did not move on to Rules, so it has died as well.

HB 2485 Establishing an automated highway speed safety camera pilot program, would authorize WSDOT to develop a traffic camera pilot program to test the use of two to three traffic cameras on state highways to evaluate the technology, determine the impact on speeding behavior in areas of testing, and compile public responses to the use of traffic cameras on highways. It restricts the use of photos and data captured by the traffic cameras in the pilot program. This bill is in the House Rules Committee and did not pass by the cutoff date.

SSB 5383 Concerning pedestrians crossing and moving along roadways. This bill would make significant change to jaywalking laws, allowing a pedestrian to cross a roadway with a posted speed limit of 45 miles per hour or less at any point as long as such crossing does not impede the flow of traffic, requiring drivers to stop for pedestrians crossing the roadway and more. It died in the Senate Rules Committee.

SB 5431, companion bill to HB 1368, Requiring and funding the purchase of zero emission school buses, has not moved in the Senate and is therefore considered dead, though its companion bill is still alive. This bill would mandate acquisition of zero-emission buses for school transport with technical and financial support from OSPI and Ecology and would reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as reduce health risks to children who ride the buses.

SB 5959 Concerning automated traffic safety cameras. This bill would authorize cities and counties to use automated traffic safety cameras if approved by local ordinance but analysis that is required to do this includes equity considerations, such as impact of camera locations on livability accessibility, economics, education, and environmental health. This bill died in the Senate Transportation Committee for lack of executive session action.

SB 6114 Requiring local airport operators to provide sustainable aviation fuel for use in private jets. This bill would require any local airport operator that provides aviation fuel to offer sustainable fuel and establishes deadlines for such requirements. This is a greenhouse gas emission strategy. This bill died as an “X” file in the Senate Rules Committee.

SB 6304 Implementing certain recommendations of the transportation electrification strategy. This bill would prioritize strategies for electric utilities and other entities to implement systems that include residential and fleet charging and upgrades to grid infrastructure in order to deliver power to electric vehicles. It includes a requirement that these entities also meet or exceed the same equity-related investment requirements in RCW 70A.535.080 as implemented by the department of ecology or a higher standard as set by relevant commissions. It died as an “X” file in the Senate Rules Committee.

Resource Information

Transportation Choices Coalition, one of the coalitions to which League belongs, is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. If you haven’t been aware of this group, check it out [here](#).

Read the report, [Ticket to Walk: How Jaywalking enforcement Impacts Washingtonians](#), that shows how jaywalking enforcement impacts people across Washington State

For information about accessibility on transit, see this federal DOT information, [Incorporating Accessibility in Transportation Projects](#).

Read what other states are doing about transit funding, [With Public Transit on the Brink, Some States Prepare to Boost Funding](#), Governing, February 1, 2024.

Read about parking reform, [How Parking Reform Is Helping Transform American Cities](#), Yale Environment 360, January 31, 2024

Check out the WSDOT Open Houses for a variety of projects and plans [here](#).

How You Can Be Involved

- Respond to Action Alerts in the legislative newsletter. These will primarily appear in the section of the newsletter related to transportation.
- Contact [Cynthia Stewart](#), Transportation Issue Chair, to receive additional information.