

Session Wrap-Up: Transportation

Issue Chair: Cynthia Stewart
Contact: cstewart@lwvwa.org

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End of Session Overview

The most significant action taken for transportation was passage of the supplemental budget. This raised total transportation appropriations for the biennium to \$14.6 billion, an increase of \$1 billion from the original biennial budget. Much of the increase is for spending at the Department of Transportation (DOT) and made possible by 1) reappropriated federal funding (\$246 million overall); 2) increased carbon emission allowance auction revenues (\$340 million allocated for transportation purposes); and 3) increased Move Ahead WA (MAW) account spending from available balances (\$308 million).

Key total appropriations include but are not limited to:

- Over \$40 million for zero-emission efforts;
- Over \$207.1 million in COVID-related funding for both state and local ferry vessel and terminal electrification efforts;
- \$35.5 million for port electrification efforts;
- Over \$30 million for various green transit project and grant programs;
- Over \$22 million in CCA-related funding for various local pedestrian, bicycle, and sidewalk projects;
- \$16 million in COVID-related funding for state and local school district fleet electrification efforts (including zero-emission school buses);
- \$150 million in Move Ahead WA-State funding for the Fish Passage Barrier Removal Program;
- An additional \$600 million in federal grant funding beyond the 2023-25 biennium for the Interstate Bridge Replacement Program;
- Over \$73 million to cover cost increases in ferry fleet electrification projects and pre-design study for a potential next class of vessels
- \$100,000 for a Rideshare Voucher Pilot to provide funds to nonprofit organizations to offer rideshare vouchers to people with low-income and people with disabilities;
- Several rail projects, including a comprehensive intercity passenger rail planning and development program to help guide intercity passenger rail development throughout the country and create a pipeline of intercity passenger rail projects ready for implementation; \$500,000 for the integration of Amtrak Cascades Service Development Plans from both Washington and Oregon to create a corridor plan for investments over the next 20 years; \$500,000 for a Service Development Plan for a new high-speed rail

corridor connecting Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver, B.C.; \$50,000 to support Montana's Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority and study of the North Coast Hiawatha route that would include travel west through Washington to Seattle.

- \$8.5 million for public education and enforcement efforts and to increase grants to local jurisdictions and community-based organizations for projects such as improving bike, pedestrian, and school zone safety.

Rail projects that the League supported, such as a new Office for Rail and work to create improvements in passenger rail service, were not included.

Other Bills That Passed

SHB 1368 Requiring and funding the purchase of zero emission school buses. This is a high priority for 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 both houses and has been sent to the Governor for signature.**

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 both houses and has been sent to the Governor for signature.**

HB 2384 Concerning automated traffic safety cameras 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. Its companion bill, **SB 5959**, died. **This bill passed both houses and has been sent to the Governor for signature.**

Bills That Did Not Pass

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 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 it did not pass the Senate Ways & Means Committee so could not move to the floor for a vote.**

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/HB 1428 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. **HB 1428** did not move after its public hearing. **SSB 5383 died in the Senate Rules Committee.**

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. Its companion bill, **HB 1371**, did not progress in the House. **SB 5494 had a public hearing in the Senate Ways & Means committee but has not moved forward to date.**

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 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 but did not get to the House floor for a vote.**

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.