

DRAFT:

Evaluation of Public Transportation's Fiscal Health in Washington

During the 2012 legislative discussion of the need for additional funding sources for public transportation, questions were raised about existing transit funding, and reserves currently held by transit agencies. To inform future discussions, ESHB 2190, the 2012 Supplemental Transportation Budget, directed the JTC to evaluate the fiscal health of public transportation in Washington and make a comparison to the fiscal health of state transportation funding.

Task 1: Legislative staff will collect and review known and conventional sources of transit financial and operational data, as it pertains to Washington State transit entities, which may include:

- WSDOT/Public Transportation program's annual publication, "Summary of Public Transportation";
- Federal Transit Administration's "National Transit Database";
- Local Government Finance Reporting System (via the State Auditor's web site);
- Other sources including transit agencies annual reports; Washington State Transit Association materials; FHWA's National Household Travel Survey; and past JTC and LTC transit studies.

Task 2: Legislative staff will evaluate changes to the fiscal and operational status of transit agencies in Washington since the 1990s, including:

- Changes in funding levels and sources for capital and operations;
- Changes in expenditures for capital and operations;
- Changes in how funds are allocated within capital and operations, including reserve funds; and
- Changes in ridership and other measures of operational activity.

Task 3: Legislative staff will collect data on State funding for transportation since the 1990's, from sources including LEAP and WSDOT.

Task 4: Legislative staff will evaluate changes to the fiscal and operational status of certain state funded transportation programs since the 1990s, including:

- Changes in funding levels and sources for capital and operations;
- Changes in expenditures for capital and operations;
- Trends in the allocation of funds within capital and operating programs; and
- Changes in use and other measures of operational activity, as appropriate.

Task 5: Legislative staff will evaluate and present public transportation fiscal results in aggregate during selected years of the time period examined. Data for specific agencies will also be examined and presented, as appropriate to inform the evaluation. That evaluation will then be shown in comparison and contrast to overall state funding of state transportation programs during similar time frames.

Proposed Draft Schedule:

- May, meet with WSDOT transit report staff to confirm data availability
- June 20th , present study work plan to JTC
- Mid-August, draft mock-up of transit data and trends, draft narrative on transit background
- Early September, draft mock-up of state data, draft narrative on state funds
- September, review and verify data
- September-October, draft of transit/state funding compare
- September-October, integrate 2011 transit data into report
- October 24th, draft report to JTC
- November, refine report
- Report due December 1st

Study Staff:

- JTC Project Lead/Back-Up: Gene Baxstrom, Mary Fleckenstein
- House Transportation Committee: Mark Matteson, David Munnecke
- Senate Transportation Committee: Hayley Gamble

Study language contained in ESHB 2190, Sec. 204:

“(9) Within the amounts provided in this section, the joint transportation committee shall conduct research to evaluate the fiscal health of public transportation in Washington. With the assistance of staff from the standing transportation committees of the legislature, the joint transportation committee shall collect and review known and conventional sources of transit financial and operational data as it pertains to Washington transit entities. The joint transportation committee shall evaluate changes to the fiscal and operational status of transit entities over the last fifteen years. The joint transportation committee shall compare fiscal results in aggregate during selected years of the time period examined with state funding for transportation in the same years. The joint transportation committee shall report its findings to the standing transportation committees of the legislature by December 1, 2012.”