

RCW 47.46.010 Finding. The legislature finds and declares:

It is essential for the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the state and the maintenance of a high quality of life that the people of the state have an efficient transportation system.

The ability of the state to provide an efficient transportation system will be enhanced by a public-private sector program providing for private entities to undertake all or a portion of the study, planning, design, development, financing, acquisition, installation, construction or improvement, operation, and maintenance of transportation systems and facility projects.

A public-private initiatives program will provide benefits to both the public and private sectors. Public-private initiatives provide a sound economic investment opportunity for the private sector. Such initiatives will provide the state with increased access to property development and project opportunities, financial and development expertise, and will supplement state transportation revenues, allowing the state to use its limited resources for other needed projects.

The public-private initiatives program, to the fullest extent possible, should encourage and promote business and employment opportunities for Washington state citizens.

The public-private initiatives program shall be implemented in cooperation, consultation, and with the support of the affected communities and local jurisdictions.

The secretary of transportation should be permitted and encouraged to test the feasibility of building privately funded transportation systems and facilities or segments thereof through the use of innovative agreements with the private sector. The secretary of transportation should be vested with the authority to solicit, evaluate, negotiate, and administer public-private agreements with the private sector relating to the planning, construction, upgrading, or reconstruction of transportation systems and facilities.

Agreements negotiated under a public-private initiatives program will not bestow on private entities an immediate right to construct and operate the proposed transportation facilities. Rather, agreements will grant to private entities the opportunity to design the proposed facilities, demonstrate public support for proposed facilities, and complete the planning processes required in order to obtain a future decision by the department of transportation and other state and local lead agencies on whether the facilities should be permitted and built.

Agreements negotiated under the public-private initiatives program should establish the conditions under which the private developer may secure the approval necessary to develop and operate the proposed transportation facilities; create a framework to attract the private capital necessary to finance their development; ensure that the transportation facilities will be designed, constructed, and operated in accordance with applicable local, regional, state, and federal laws and the applicable standards and policies of the department of transportation; and require a demonstration that the proposed transportation facility has the support of the affected communities and local jurisdictions.

The legislature finds that the Puget Sound congestion pricing project, selected under this chapter, raises major transportation policy, economic, and equity concerns. These relate to the integrity of the state's high occupancy vehicle program; the cost-effective movement of freight and goods; the diversion of traffic to local streets and arterials; and possible financial hardship to commuters.

The legislature further finds that these potential economic and social impacts require comprehensive legislative review prior to advancement of the project and directs that the secretary not proceed with the implementation of the project without prior approval of the legislature.

The department of transportation should be encouraged to take advantage of new opportunities provided by federal legislation under section 1012 of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). That section establishes a new program authorizing federal participation in construction or improvement or improvement of publicly or privately owned toll roads, bridges, and tunnels, and allows states to leverage available federal funds as a means for attracting private sector capital. [1995 2nd sp.s. c 19 § 1; 1993 c 370 § 1.]

Effective date—1995 2nd sp.s. c 19: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and shall take effect immediately [June 16, 1995]." [1995 2nd sp.s. c 19 § 5.]