

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5232

As of January 25, 2021

Title: An act relating to limiting bonding toll revenues on certain state highway facilities.

Brief Description: Limiting bonding toll revenues on certain state highway facilities.

Sponsors: Senator King.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/26/21.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Repeals toll bond authorizations for the Interstate 405/State Route 167 Express Toll Lanes and the Puget Sound Gateway facility.
- Requires toll facility proposals to consider a policy guideline to pledge toll revenue for debt financing only when the revenue is generated from toll bridges.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Erica Bramlet (786-7321)

Background: Toll Facilities. The Legislature must authorize a facility as toll-eligible before it may be tolled. The Transportation Commission is the state's tolling authority with responsibility for setting toll rates. The Department of Transportation is the operator of the authorized toll facilities, which include the following:

Facility	Tolling Initiation	Format
Tacoma Narrows Bridge	2007	bridge - all lanes tolled (eastbound only)

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

SR 520 Bridge	2011	bridge - all lanes tolled
I-405/SR 167 Express Toll Lanes	2015/2008	roadway - 1-2 lanes tolled
Puget Sound Gateway	2026 (assumed)	roadway - all lanes tolled
SR 99 Tunnel	2019	unnel - all lanes tolled

Project Financing. In the past 20 years, Washington State has used a range of methods to finance larger transportation projects. The State Route (SR) 520 Bridge is the only facility for which toll-backed bonds have been issued in this time period. The bridge was partially paid for with these toll-backed bonds, in addition to state funds, federal funds, federal loans or grants, and local funds. The Tacoma Narrows Bridge and SR 99 Tunnel have used tolls to cover project costs, but instead of toll-backed bonds, used a repayment structure where tolls reimburse another state funding source used to issue bonds.

In 2019, ESSB 5825 passed, which authorized both tolling on the I-405/SR 167 Express Toll Lane (ETL) and Puget Sound Gateway facilities, and the issuance of up to \$1.5 billion in bonds to fund various project priorities.

Summary of Bill: Bond authorizations totaling \$1.5 billion for the I-405/SR 167 ETL and the Puget Sound Gateway facilities are repealed. Accompanying references to project priorities the Legislature intended to fund using bond proceeds are removed.

The requirement that tolls be reduced on the two facilities once bonds are repaid is removed. A requirement that 2+ carpools be allowed into the I-405 ETLs between Bellevue and Renton unless an analysis is completed showing this amount of revenue would not cover financial obligations is removed.

A provision is added that requires toll facility proposals to consider a policy guideline to pledge toll revenue for debt financing only when the revenue is generated from toll bridges.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 14, 2021.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.