

Skagit County Legislative Report April 7, 2019

With just over three weeks of legislative session remaining, both the House and Senate have adopted their proposed versions of operating, capital and transportation budgets, and the legislature is actively advancing bills forward to meet the April 9th fiscal committee cutoff deadline. Fiscal committees will be working through Saturday to ensure they are able to move bills forward before Tuesday's fiscal committee cutoff.

This coming week, budget writers will begin negotiating and working to reconcile differences between the House and Senate budget proposals, including whether and how to increase taxes to raise more revenue. Legislators will begin meeting on the floor and voting on bills. Bill will need to pass out of the opposite chamber (i.e. House bills need to pass the Senate; Senate bills need to pass the House) by April 17th. The final weeks of session are likely to be full of tension as the two Chambers resolve their differences, the House identifies a new Speaker, and complex policy issues such as tolling, clean energy, and affordable housing.

Skagit County Priorities

The county's priority for GTHGA is a \$1.5 million capital budget request to upgrade the county's emergency communications system. We are pleased with the legislature's response to this request, providing \$750,000 in the House budget and \$1 million in the Senate budget. As negotiations between the chambers progress, we will continue working with Sen. Lovelett, Rep. Paul, and the county's entire delegation to support the highest level of funding possible in the final budget.

Bill Summaries

Outlined below are relevant bills GTHGA is tracking for the county. Where a position is indicated below, GTHGA will communicate these positions to legislators if they are considered by the entire chamber.

Bill #	Title	Short Description	Status	Sponsor	Position
EHB 1219 (SB 5195)	Providing cities and counties authority to use real estate excise taxes to support affordable housing and homelessness projects.	House Bill 1219, sponsored by Rep. Amy Walen (D-Kirkland), allows cities and counties to utilize real estate excise tax revenues for affordable housing. Cities and counties have the authority to use up to \$1 million of real estate excise tax revenues for affordable housing under current law, but the authority is scheduled to sunset in June 2019. Before passing the House, the bill was	S 2nd Reading	Walen	Support

		<p>significantly amended. This version of the bill extends the sunset on the authority to January 1st, 2026, so long as the city or county documents that it has funds for certain capital projects in its capital facilities plan. The amendment also reinstates the financial cap on the use of REET II funding for affordable housing, limiting the annual amount to either \$100,000 or 25% of available funds not exceeding \$1,000,000. This cap does not apply to REET II funding used prior to June 30th, 2019.</p>			
<p>SHB 1406 (SB 5646)</p>	<p>Encouraging investments in affordable and supportive housing.</p>	<p>House Bill 1406, sponsored by Rep. June Robinson (D-Everett), would allow local jurisdictions to impose a .02 credit against the state sales tax to fund affordable housing. Cities that have imposed a local housing levy may impose the full .02 credit within city boundaries. Counties may impose the full .02 credit in unincorporated areas. In all other incorporated areas, the city and county would split the authority, and each would impose a .01 credit. If a city does not utilize the .01 credit within one year of the effective date of the bill, the county can then impose the .01 credit (and vice versa). The revenue may be used to acquire, rehabilitate, or construct affordable housing or fund the operations and maintenance of new units of affordable or supportive housing for persons whose income is at or below 60% of the adjusted median income for the jurisdiction imposing the tax. A credit against the state sales tax is not an increase in the state sales tax; rather, it is sales tax revenue that would</p>	<p>S Ways & Means</p>	<p>Robinson</p>	<p>Support</p>

		<p>otherwise be deposited into the state general fund that is instead redirected to the local level. The substitute version of the bill that passed the House specifies that to enact the maximum 0.02 percent rate, a city must levy a qualifying local tax no later than 12 months after the effective date of the bill, rather than within 12 months of the effective date, and states that the median income calculation for cities imposing the tax to be based on the city's median income, not the county's (addressing a drafting error). The bill was further amended in the Senate Housing Stability and Affordability to add a voter approved property tax levy used solely for affordable housing to be eligible as a qualifying local tax source and removes provisions regarding calculation of median income for certain cities whose median income is not available from the United States Census Bureau.</p>			
<p>2SHB 1497 (SB 5732)</p>	<p>Concerning foundational public health services.</p>	<p>House Bill 1497, sponsored by Rep. June Robinson (D-Everett), integrates foundational public health service standards with current state public health practices. The bill requires that the state modify its priorities, funding allocation, and appropriation to fit the foundational public health service model and repeals prior statutes related to the definition, duties, planning, measurement, and funding of public health programs. The bill also requires the Department of Health, by October 1st, 2020, to present on a series of changes related to the implementation of foundational</p>	<p>Del to Gov</p>	<p>Robinson</p>	<p>Support</p>

		public health services, including planned delivery models, changes in public health system capacity, and improvements in health outcomes. The bill passed the House 96-4.			
EHB 1638	Promoting immunity against vaccine preventable diseases.	House Bill 1638, sponsored by Rep. Paul Harris (R-Vancouver), removes the philosophical or personal objection exemption from the requirement to receive the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine. The bill also requires that a public school, a private school or a licensed day care center receive proof of immunizations before the child can attend the school or center. The bill passed out of the House with a series of floor amendments. The version of the bill that passed the House maintains removal of the philosophical or personal exemption from the MMR vaccine, but allows exemption from all other vaccination requirements in certain additional cases, including: proof of disease immunity through laboratory evidence or a health care provider's attestation of disease immunity, exemption based on non-responder status due to no positive antibody response to vaccinations, exemption based on health care providers' attestation to adverse reactions to vaccines in family members, and grandfathering the restrictions for current exempted high school students. The bill was amended in the Senate Committee on Health and Long Term Care, removing these additional exemptions.	S Rules 2	Harris	Support

<p>HB 2119 (SB 5975)</p>	<p>Concerning the distribution of moneys derived from certain state forestlands.</p>	<p>House Bill 2119, sponsored by Rep. Debra Lekanoff (D-Bow), allows a county to pay, distribute, and prorate payments of money from the former Common School Trust Land exchanged into the State Forestlands Trust in the same way that general taxes are paid for the former forestlands subject to the exchange. The bill addresses revenue loss for junior taxing districts (including the Burlington School District) as a result of the state's Blanchard Forest Strategy. Although there are some concerns surrounding the general language of the bill, the bill cannot be drafted more narrowly without becoming special legislation. The bill passed through the House 61-31.</p>	<p>S Rules 2</p>	<p>Morris</p>	<p>Support</p>
<p>SSB 5366</p>	<p>Expanding the property tax exemption for new and rehabilitated multiple-unit dwellings in urban centers.</p>	<p>Senate Bill 5366, sponsored by Sen. Keith Wagoner (R-Sedro-Woolley), allows all cities and towns to provide property tax exemptions for eligible multi-unit residential housing projects in urban centers until July 1, 2022. The bill was amended in the Senate Ways and Means Committee to add a provision allowing any county to establish a residential targeted area and receive a property tax exemption on qualifying projects from July 1, 2022 to July 1, 2025.</p>	<p>H Hous, Com Dev &</p>	<p>Wagoner</p>	<p>Support</p>
<p>SB 5505 (HB 2125)</p>	<p>Addressing the use of local stormwater charges paid by the department of transportation.</p>	<p>Senate Bill 5505, sponsored by Sen. Steve Hobbs (D- Lake Stevens), addresses local stormwater charges, which are paid by the Department of Transportation. As drafted, the bill would require that any fees that are levied by counties to be used solely for stormwater control facilities as they related specifically to state</p>	<p>H Trans</p>	<p>Hobbs</p>	<p>Oppose</p>

		highway runoff, preempting counties from utilizing the funds for other needs. The bill passed through the Senate without amendment.			
ESB 5779	Concerning ballot drop box placement requirements.	Senate Bill 5779, sponsored by Sen. Patty Kuderer (D-Bellevue), would eliminate the requirement that the county auditor must have a minimum of one ballot drop box per 15,000 registered voters in the county. Instead, one ballot drop box would be required for every 20,000 registered voters in the county. The bill also eliminate that a ballot drop box must be in every city, town and place in a county with a post office. The bill was amended before passing the Senate unanimously, adding provisions that conform the bill with changes made in ESSB 5079, the Native American Voting Rights Act.	H State Govt & Tr	Kuderer	Support