

MINUTES
SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, March 10, 2020

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW53

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Brackett, Vice Chairman Crabtree, Senators Winder, Den Hartog, Rice, Burtenshaw, Buckner-Webb, and Nelson

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Senator Lodge

NOTE: The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

CONVENED: With a quorum present, **Chairman Brackett** convened the meeting of the Senate Transportation Committee (Committee) at 1:32 p.m. He welcomed Scott Stokes, Chief Deputy Director of the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), to introduce Robert Hoff, who is being reappointed to the Idaho Transportation Board (ITB).

GUBERNATORIAL REAPPOINTMENT: **Mr. Stokes** said he had worked with Mr. Hoff since he filled the vacancy left with the resignation of Lee Gagner of Idaho Falls, and that term is now expiring. Mr. Hoff's term commenced January 31, 2020 and expires January 31, 2026. Because Mr. Hoff served on the Aeronautics Advisory Board for 15 years, ITD has been the beneficiary of his wisdom and experience. ITD is pleased to have Mr. Hoff as a member of the ITB.

Mr. Hoff said he was a lifetime Idahoan who has farmed and ranched in the Idaho Falls area since his family purchased the property in 1905. It had previously been owned by Sam F. Taylor who was an author and signatory of the Idaho Constitution dated August 6, 1889. In 1984, his family went into the aviation business and created Aero Mark in Idaho Falls, which is essentially a gas station for airplanes and other aviation services. He enjoyed being a member of ITD's Aeronautics Advisory Board. He said that being a member of ITB is somewhat overwhelming with all a board member needs to learn, which has helped him come to understand the responsibility and the trust placed in the board members. He has been very impressed with ITD and its employees, who display enthusiasm at every level.

DISCUSSION: **Mr. Hoff** agreed with **Chairman Brackett** and **Senator Winder** as they shared their perspectives on the issues and challenges Mr. Hoff and the entire ITB face with regard to the needs of rural communities versus the more urban community congestion. The fact is that no matter how many years the State is into its transportation plan, there will never be enough money to do all that needs to be done. The Senators suggested ITB needs to become even more creative to keep up with Idaho's continued growth.

Chairman Brackett thanked Mr. Hoff and told him the Committee would vote on his reappointment at their next meeting.

GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT: **Jeff Marker**, ITD Aeronautics Administrator, introduced Todd Hitchcock who was being appointed to the Aeronautics Advisory Board (Board) commencing on February 20, 2020 and expiring January 31, 2025. The Board has a number of responsibilities including operating 3 state aircraft, 31 back country air strips, providing appropriated funds to community airports, operating a search and rescue function, and providing safety and education programs for the aviation community and youth science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) development. The Board is comprised of five members that each serve a three-year term. Mr. Hitchcock holds one of their at-large Board positions. Mr. Hitchcock flew for the military and saw six deployments, he has flown commercial aircraft, and he owns Spur Aviation in Twin Falls. Spur Aviation under Mr. Hitchcock's leadership operates 12 aircraft focusing on air attack of wildland firefighting and provides charter aircraft services.

Mr. Hitchcock said he has lived in Idaho for 46 years. He grew up in McCall where his family was in the timber industry and did a lot of flying. In 2000 he went his own way and served in the military for 24 years, and for the last 19 years he has worked for cargo companies. He started a couple of aviation businesses brokering aircraft in Idaho, then two years ago he bought Spur Aviation where they fight wildland fires throughout the United States, including Alaska.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Den Hartog** was impressed with the level of experience for both these appointments, and thanked them both for their willingness to serve the state. **Chairman Brackett**, **Vice Chairman Crabtree**, and **Senator Winder** also offered their thanks and shared their personal experiences with Mr. Hitchcock.

MINUTES: **Senator Nelson** moved to approve the Minutes of Tuesday, March 3, 2020. **Senator Burtenshaw** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

S 1401 **David Cameron** of the Rail Conference in Washington, D.C., introduced the bill by stating that motorists need to stop so many feet from a railroad crossing when a train approaches. There is no reference in Idaho Code to train-like equipment. This bill simply adds the language "or other on-track equipment" to Idaho Code.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Den Hartog** asked why this bill was bringing brought so late in the session. **Mr. Cameron** was not sure but he is involved because someone from Idaho contacted their office in Washington, D.C. to get it going.

Senator Nelson asked if railroad crossing signage needed to be changed or if the public needed to be educated about the changes to the equipment being added to Idaho Code. **Mr. Cameron** did not believe anything other than adding the language to Idaho Code was necessary.

TESTIMONY: **Mike Brassey**, representing Union Pacific Railroad, and **Steve Thomas**, representing Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad, both testified in support of **S 1401**. It is in keeping with national efforts to make the changes in this bill uniform for transportation and maintenance systems.

MOTION: **Senator Buckner-Webb** moved to send **S 1401** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Vice Chairman Crabtree** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**. **Chairman Brackett** said he would carry the bill on the Senate floor.

ADJOURNED: With no further business before the Committee, **Chairman Brackett** adjourned the meeting at 2:00 p.m.

Senator Brackett
Chair

Gaye Bennett
Secretary