

MINUTES
SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, March 19, 2019

TIME: 1:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW53

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Brackett, Vice Chairman Crabtree, Senators Winder, Den Hartog, Lodge, Rice, Mathias(Buckner-Webb), and Nelson

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Senator Burtenshaw

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: **Chairman Brackett** convened the meeting of the Senate Transportation Committee (Committee) at 1:03 p.m.

PASSED THE GAVEL: Chairman Brackett passed the gavel to Vice Chairman Crabtree

S 1201 **Vice Chairman Crabtree** invited Chairman Brackett to present **S 1201**.
Chairman Brackett said the purpose of **S 1201** is to transition the Idaho State Police (ISP) off funding from the Highway Distribution Account (HDA). Currently, ISP receives 5 percent of that account which is approximately \$17 million. ISP's total budget is approximately \$75 million. That transition will be achieved over a five-year period starting in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 by reducing ISP's share of the HDA by 1 percent each year through FY2025. It is anticipated that ISP's General Fund appropriation would be increased to off-set the reduction from HDA. **Chairman Brackett** concluded by summarizing that the current distribution of HDA is 38 percent to the local units of government for roads and highways, 57 percent to the State Highway Account, and 5 percent to the Law Enforcement Account. With the passage of **S 1201**, the new distribution after the five-year phase-in will be 60 percent to the State Highway Account and 40 percent to local highway jurisdictions.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Lodge** asked Vice Chairman Crabtree, since he sits on the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee (JFAC), where the replacement funding will come from. **Vice Chairman Crabtree** replied that they have ways to deal with funding issues, and that 32 other states currently fund transportation from their general funds. **Senator Lodge** said her concern was safety on the roads and she was torn between two important issues.

MOTION: **Senator Rice** moved to send **S 1201** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Den Hartog** commented that this was a very thoughtful way for ISP to go through the transition. ISP gets most of its funding through the General Fund and JFAC has ways to find the funding.

Senator Nelson said he struggles with this vote because he sees the dire needs for funds to improve Idaho's transportation infrastructure, and he is unsure how he will vote on the floor. He passed out and explained a handout listing 21 states that fund transportation from their general fund. His conclusion was that Idaho is sitting on the average and there are many needs to consider. He questioned whether this would be reversible. **Vice Chairman Crabtree** said that the information he received from the Legislative Services Office (LSO) was that there were 36 states using general funds to support transportation.

Senator Rice reminded the Committee that every legislature can reverse the acts of previous legislatures. These actions are not set in stone, but no matter how many ISP officers the state has, if the state doesn't fix the roads and address congestion, then the patrol function of ISP will be defeated. He agreed that there is no disagreement that ISP needed to be properly funded.

Senator Winder remarked that, unfortunately, this has become a debate between ISP, the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), and supporting law enforcement. This is not about the job ISP is doing and no one is trying to cut their budget. The amount of money involved is very small when compared to the total state budget. **Senator Winder** said he would continue to help find funding for ISP for as long as he is in the legislature.

VOICE VOTE: The motion to send **S 1201** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation passed by **voice vote**. **Senator Nelson** asked to be recorded as voting nay.

GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT: **Vice Chairman Crabtree** invited Jerry Whitehead, Chairman of the Idaho Transportation Board (ITB), to introduce gubernatorial appointee James Thompson of Sandpoint to the Committee.

Mr. Whitehead said he was before the Committee to introduce a new member of the ITB from District 1. Jim Thompson left Idaho after graduating from the University of Idaho. He built a career and a business as a civil engineer before returning to Idaho. He was happy to introduce him to the Committee and welcomed him to the ITB.

Mr. Thompson began by saying he was from Sandpoint and was the oldest of seven children, all of whom moved to Sandpoint from North Dakota in 1957. He has a bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering and is a licensed engineer in Idaho and California. His career was in heavy civil construction — building docks, bridges, and deep underground shoring. The business he owned was a diving company that did underwater pipelines. He and his wife retired and moved back to his family's farm west of Sandpoint.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Den Hartog** thanked Mr. Thompson and noticed he lived on Helen Thompson Road and wondered if it was named after his mother. **Mr. Thompson** said it was named after her and her photo is in the Capitol as she was the National Mother of the Year in 1980. She raised seven children after his father died in 1960. **Senator Den Hartog** commented on Mr. Thompson's resume and experience that will serve the ITB well. She wanted to know what drew him to this appointment. **Mr. Thompson** said friends who had served in similar capacities encouraged him to apply.

Senator Winder thanked Mr. Thompson for coming to Boise for this confirmation hearing. Having served the ITB, **Senator Winder** said Mr. Thompson would get a great sense of accomplishment from the position.

Vice Chairman Crabtree thanked Mr. Thompson and told him the Committee would vote on his appointment at the next meeting.

H 208 **Vice Chairman Crabtree** invited Mike Brassey, representing Union Pacific Railroad, to present **H 208**, as Representative Monks was unavailable to present.

Mr. Brassey said this legislation relates to the requirements for traffic control devices at railroad crossing. It allows the state and local jurisdictions to erect stop signs only where they are needed and requires railroads to install yield signs at at-grade railroad crossings where there are no stop signs.

The use of these railroad traffic devices are contained in the National Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (Manual). In 2009, the Manual and industry practice were changed to reflect a new best practice recommendation for railroad crossing signs. Earlier this Legislative Session, the Committee approved an ITD Administrative Rule eliminating the requirement to add new IdaShield Signs to the posts of the crossbuck signs at railroad crossings. This action made it practical for railroads to comply with the requirements of the Manual. By eliminating the IdaShield Signs, space is provided on the crossbuck post for the railroads to install yield signs.

Mr. Brassey concluded by stating that passing **H 208** will result in safer railroad crossings than is in existing law, and it is fiscally sound. He asked the Committee to send **H 208** to the floor with a do pass recommendation.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Nelson** asked if the Manual is referenced in Idaho Code. **Mr. Brassey** said it is referenced in Idaho Code, but in another section that is not part of this legislation.

MOTION: **Senator Den Hartog** moved to send **H 208** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Winder** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**. **Senator Den Hartog** offered to carry the bill on the Senate floor.

WELCOME: **Vice Chairman Crabtree** welcomed Senator Mathias to the Committee, who is replacing Senator Buckner-Webb for the remainder of this Legislative Session.

ADJOURNED: With no further business before the Committee, **Vice Chairman Crabtree** adjourned the meeting at 1:46 p.m.

Senator Brackett
Chair

Gaye Bennett
Secretary