

MINUTES
SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

- DATE:** Thursday, February 11, 2021
- TIME:** 1:30 P.M.
- PLACE:** Room WW53
- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chair Den Hartog, Vice Chairman Woodward, Senators Winder, Lodge, Rice, Vick, Crabtree, Nelson, and Wintrow
- ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** None
- 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:** **Chair Den Hartog** called the meeting of the Senate Transportation Committee (Committee) to order at 1:32 p.m.
- MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Woodward** moved to approve the Minutes of February 2, 2021. **Senator Rice** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.
- MOTION:** **Senator Rice** moved to send **RS 28429, RS 28440, RS 28442, RS 28446, RS 28498, and RS 28510** to print. **Senator Crabtree** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.
- PRESENTATION:** **Gary Peters**, Chairman, Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport, presented findings from the Idaho Intrastate Passenger Air Service Study. He briefed the Senate on the demonstrated need for additional air service routes in northern and eastern Idaho. Historically, there were profitable flight routes connecting northern and eastern regions of Idaho to Boise, but they became unprofitable and services were discontinued. He cited the lack of marketing as the main reason for operational shortfalls and asked for funding from the State to offset minimum revenue guarantee losses. These funds would support the developing routes as they are established and until they become profitable. The discontinuance of the regional flight routes has negatively impacted rural communities due to a lack of access to health care, education, and additional supportive resources. These resources remain more readily available to residents in the urban setting of Boise, but remain a several hours drive away for rural communities. In order to secure additional flight services from the airlines, he stressed, it is imperative to have the State's support.
- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Crabtree** asked how the airports will overcome a shortage of people filling seats on new flight routes. **Mr. Peters** discussed the influence of marketing and its impact on maintaining an appropriate load factor. He further expanded on the importance of informing regional residents about the value of these additional flight routes. He also stressed the importance of informing regional residents of the need to utilize these additional routes to ensure their continuation.
- Senator Nelson** questioned when the best time would be to approach airlines to discuss additional routes. **Mr. Peters** clarified the time is soon, if not now, since airlines are reacting to COVID-19 shortages. He noted airlines are seeking new ways to create revenue, and establishing new services may be an option they are willing to consider as they change their mindset from traditional, or pre-COVID-19, operations.

Senator Woodward requested clarification on the last occurrence of a flight scheduled between Lewiston and Boise. **Mr. Peters** noted it was several years ago and confirmed the discontinuance can be attributed to the change toward larger aircraft with lower load capacities, which ultimately created a low-performance route. This low-performance route became unprofitable for airlines, and they discontinued the service.

Jeff Marker, Administrator, Idaho Division of Aeronautics, presented an overview of the division and discussed the various critical functions it serves. He noted grants are a portion of the division's work and emphasized the importance grants have on facilitating infrastructure and planning for community airports.

Senator Vick requested information on how detrimental it is to the State for residents to fly out of Spokane, Washington, for regional flights, rather than departing from Idaho. **Mr. Marker** said he was unable to quantify the losses but confirmed residents departing out of Spokane does have a negative effect on the State.

HCR 003

Relating to Naval Fleet. **Senator Winder** opened discussion by noting that while the State has had several surface ships named after it, the naming of a submarine is an additional unique honor. He further discussed the funds being raised to support sailors serving onboard USS Idaho, and noted former Governor Dirk Kempthorne is involved in this process. He noted this resolution sets forth the State's approval, encouragement, and acknowledgment of the project.

Senator Rice said he appreciated the inclusion of support and protection for all those who will sail the USS Idaho, and he expressed the State's wishes of protection for all those who serve in the armed forces.

MOTION:

Senator Woodward moved to send **HCR 003** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Rice** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

ADJOURNED:

There being no further business at this time, **Chair Den Hartog** adjourned the meeting at 2:00 p.m.

Senator Den Hartog
Chair

Emily Carlisle
Secretary