

Transportation Committee

February 4, 2020 | 8:00 am – 9:30 am

Riverside | Boise, ID | Aspen Room

MEETING MINUTES

Call to Order | *Chair Doug Zenner*

Consideration of Approval of September 2019 Meeting Minutes

Scott Hancock moved to approve the September 2019 minutes. Dwight Davis seconded. Motion carried.

Legislative Update | *Bert Brackett, ID Senate, District 23; Joe Palmer, ID House 20*

Rep. Palmer thanked the committee for the opportunity to be with IAC. He shared a couple of bills he's working on for funding of transportation. One is on the House floor. In sales tax revenue distribution, they take a small percentage of a percentage that would then go to funding transportation. Currently they take 1 percent. A day prior, they ran a bill that takes it to 2 percent. It is bondable. It would make \$300 million available for ITD to use on projects. Last year there was an amendment to a very similar bill in the Senate. That bill was 2 votes shy of passing. The money just comes from growth without raising taxes. Rep. Palmer shared that as long as we get more money for roads, he's good with some more money going to locals as well as to the state.

Palmer wants to take the surplus eliminator money and use it to build a fund plus adding some of the state's rainy-day funds. Then put this money into a higher interest account to make more money for Transportation. If it would have passed last year, we would have had \$17 million dollars in interest. It's not a total solution. He wants to look to the future thinking about our kids and grandkids. That's the most important bill that we have for transportation this year. We've talked to some of the Senators and hopefully addressed their concerns. This bill will be reintroduced soon.

Senator Brackett shared that he likes to come and meet with counties. He stated that he thought Chairman Palmer gave a really good overview regarding the funding aspect of Transportation thus far. Senator Brackett's focus has been on policy on the Senate side. We have several distracted driving bills going forward this year. Also working a lot on rural broadband. Most of the cable is laid in right of ways so it is related to transportation. Working to clear up gray areas on who can do what with regards to laying the cable.

Brackett shared, part of the reason there hasn't been as much focus on transportation funding is that they are waiting on the BSU Funding study to come out. The priority of the Governor and majority of the legislature still seems to be on increasing reserves at the state level. We have about \$500 million in reserves. Percentage wise that's what we had going into the great recession. The goal is to increase that reserve to \$800 million. There's a bit of a contradiction between building the reserves and paying for infrastructure. If we get that up to \$800 million than the interest off of that can be used for transportation. A tax on new automobiles is another bill that is floating in the House. A sales tax on materials has been looked at in the past, but that would disrupt the counties revenue stream. He's been told that there's a solution that is in the works that would make it possible to do that.

Commissioner Hancock asked if the legislators have considered increasing the gas tax again. Rep. Palmer responded that any tax can be a user tax depending on how you look at that. He will put it off as long as he can until they gain every inch that they can. He said they might be looking at that again next year. It's talked about continually. It's not an easy thing to talk about an increase. There may be a bill sitting on his desk right now that talks about that, but it definitely won't be this year.

Senator Brackett said he agrees with everything that Palmer said. Not this year—next year. Need to wait for BSU study and look at how we tax electric vehicles and heavier trucks. State police are shifting off of the distribution account to the general fund, so that should start kicking in next year. Diesel enforcement is also something that they are looking at. Idaho doesn't have an enforcement program currently. Truckers are taking that on with a bill. Farm Bureau is more receptive this year. They realize that they are dependent on the rural roads, but need good infrastructure in place.

Assessor Brian Stender asked, last year we had a committee to discuss the Sheriff's office having a fee. Has that been considered this year? Sen. Brackett responded, several counties that have long lines at the DMV aren't getting cost recovery on driver's licenses. People would rather drive out of county then wait in line which then impacts more rural counties, causing lines there. It's a situation begging for a solution. Rep. Palmer admitted he drove to Gem county to get his license because it's quicker. The Sheriff's Association and their lobbyist are pushing to allow their commissioners to raise that fee. Palmer asked them to talk to the House Transportation committee about support. Palmer is also talking to a sponsor from a bill last year that uses a different solution to see if they would be willing to run that again. Efficiency between counties is different. Palmer questioned, why does it take so long in one county in comparison to another county? If that question is answered, they may be more willing to consider changing the fee.

Commissioner Shari Maupin asked what about an increase in what they are paid per mile? Palmer said everything they're trying to do is aimed at getting more money into the pot.

Doug Zenner said that bridges are so important. And likes the idea of increasing to 2% especially with how it will help bridges.

Sen. Brackett said it's always a possibility to raise the dollar amount per mile in the formula. But he cautioned, if you put more money in one place, then you have to take it out of another or put more money in as a whole. Thinks that in the study perhaps that will be addressed.

Jacob Greenberg asked would the \$20-30 million from impact fees go to the state only? Rep. Palmer said that bill is in trouble and won't go anywhere so there's no need to worry.

Bridge Inspection Update | *Laila Kral LHTAC Deputy Administrator*

Laila Kral shared over the next 5 years, 40 percent of Idaho's bridges will be over 50 years old. If you go out 6-10 years, then 60 percent will be over 50 years old. There is a bill that ITD brought forward to raise the amount for matching funds to increase the federal match for bridge inspections. IAC and other local transportation organizations support this bill.

356 bridges are currently posted for load. This means the load needs to be reduced. The impact of a posted bridge means lost commerce. LHTAC looks at how they can keep good structures good and move poor structures up to good. Last year they put in for a grant to rural states to address structures in poor condition. They received the grant. It will be used for 8 structures. The structures are all across southern Idaho. A question was asked regarding why they are all in southern Idaho. Kral said the decision was based on the findings of a consultant who conducted a very detailed analysis.

They tried for a grant in North Idaho, but were competing with 700 applications for the fund. 55 went forward to the final round. The LHTAC grant request was one of them, but it didn't go through the final cut. They learned a lot from the process and will be going forward with a new application making improvements to the grant application process.

They also applied for grants to bring in experts for training for local officials. The first one they received paid for travel for road supervisors to travel to classes on repairs.

We've talked a lot about structures 20 feet and over because of federal laws that require those are inspected. They did not know what the 10-20 foot number was even though it is an important vein in the process. They undertook a large project reaching out to locals asking if they had an inventory. Quite a few did but many others did not. They worked together with locals to identify these structures. They found 1804 of these structures. They are using this number moving forward. They shared it with the House and Senate Transportation committees to help them understand that more funds are needed to address these needs.

Funding for bridges has remained flat. They have advertised and bid for four different bridge projects. All four bids came in on average 40% higher than what was expected. They think there

is a gap in that funding. They need to delay some federally funded projects and designs to give more time to increase match.

Transportation Partnering, ITD Legislation Update | Mollie McCarty, Idaho Transportation Department Governmental Affairs Manager

Mollie McCarty shared that there are 6 districts for ITD. She hopes that everyone knows who their district engineer is in each district. They also have board members in each district. If you do not know who they are, reach out to ITD to find out. This year ITD wants to get together and discuss shared needs at discussions across the state.

In the morning at these discussions, ITD plans to gather with local government road and bridge decision makers to discuss efficiencies and what is working well. They also want to discuss ways they can all improve together. In the afternoon, ITD wants to talk with locals about needs. What are the projects and Corridors that need addressed? How can we work on these together?

ITD is attempting to reduce lines at the DMV by using an online process for driver's license renewals. They are also working with inmates to help them get an id card using machines at the department of corrections. Whoever is performing the transaction would then retain the fee for that administrative process.

Brian Stender asked if there is a set fee or fee limits for private vendors. Joe Johns from Kootenai county said that they would be able to charge what they need to make a profit.

Jacob Greenberg said their assessor's office is working with the sheriff's office to do DMV work together. He reported that it is working better, but they still do not have enough personnel. They also have started an express lane that prioritizes people who have things that take less time to process, so they do not have to wait so long in line.

McCarty explained that she knows some counties are also offering appointments online, but those fill up quickly. We need to remind the state legislature and the public that these issues need to be addressed.

Sherry Maupin mentioned that broadband would be critical for Valley county to move to online services because they do not have good online service connections right now. Molly McCarty responded that in the ideal world, they would coordinate regarding where conduit is needed. Because laying conduit could increase road construction costs by 50%.

Boise State University Transportation Study Update | *Dr. Vanessa Fry, Research Director, Idaho Policy Institute, Boise State University*

Dr. Fry said it's great to hear of the support that the BSU study is getting from legislators. She asked if anyone remembered the Governor's taskforce report from 2011 regarding Transportation needs. The current BSU Transportation Study is an update of that report plus a little bit more. They are looking at the current state of infrastructure; what changes have occurred since 2011; and what we need to do to address and plan for in the future.

They are mapping out the current flow of funding and how it is being spent. They will then project out the costs to address actual needs for transportation infrastructure. They want this to be a dynamic financial model where they can plug in new needs and see where the shifts could occur.

In addition, they are looking at best practices across the country as well as different innovative ways to use the funding we have now to allow our dollars to stretch farther. A state infrastructure bank is one idea. The endowment fund is another. The project will finish in May. They plan to present the findings in June.

Commissioner Dave Radford asked if Dr. Fry were to summarize differences so far, what has she seen in the last nine years. Dr. Fry said they are looking primarily at the cost of maintaining roads and bridges and addressing bike and pedestrian use and public transportation use in more depth. She could not speak to the dollar amount differences because they are still running those numbers.

Radford followed up with a comment that public transportation from state money is not really available. It is mostly used as a passthrough for federal government funding.

Dr. Fry shared that there are a few areas in the state that are able to use local option taxes to fund public transportation. She is optimistic about the results of the report.

Open Discussion | *Chair Doug Zenner*

Jacob Greenberg expressed appreciation for the comment regarding the inadequacy of the fuel tax increase a few years ago. He feels that we missed an opportunity during that time, but there are other options. A few years ago, when they were trying to figure out how to increase funds, they looked at increasing registration fees to help with funding. The cost of construction has gone up and gas tax is not tied to inflation, so this might be something worth considering.

Sherry Maupin said that Valley county gets a huge influx in visitors but they do not have a way to get those visitors to help pay for roads. She wondered how they can pay for that.

Doug Zenner shared that Nez Perce county established a federal state matching account to provide match for projects in the future. They dedicate money to go into those funds to prepare for their upcoming transportation projects.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:25 am.

Transportation Committee

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