

MINUTES
SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, March 12, 2019

TIME: 1:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW53

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Brackett, Vice Chairman Crabtree, Senators Winder, Den Hartog, Lodge, Rice, 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 1:07 p.m.

GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT: **Chairman Brackett** welcomed Jerry Whitehead, Chairman of the Idaho Transportation Board (ITB), and invited him to introduce Robert Hoff to the Committee.

Mr. Whitehead thanked the Committee for taking up the consideration of Robert "Bob" Hoff to fulfill the vacancy left by Lee Gagner in ITB's District 6. Although there is only a year left in Mr. Gagner's term, **Mr. Whitehead** said he was pleased to add Mr. Hoff and his experience from serving on the Idaho Transportation Department's (ITD) Aeronautics Advisory Board to the ITB's roster. **Mr. Whitehead** asked that the Committee welcome Robert Hoff.

Mr. Hoff said he was born and raised in Idaho Falls where he graduated from high school. He attended Idaho State College Technical School in their Airframe and Engine Maintenance program where he graduated with an aircraft mechanics license in 1961. In 1984 he started Aero Mark, Inc., an aviation business, with his brother. They merged with Red Baron Aviation in 1988, and in 1997 he bought his brother out of the business. Aero Mark, Inc. continues to operate as one of Idaho's premier Fixed Base Operators (FBO), and the business has also become an airplane dealership. **Mr. Hoff** concluded by saying he has had the privilege of sitting on multiple boards and has received various honors.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Den Hartog** thanked Mr. Hoff for his willingness to serve, and asked him what ITB's goals should be for the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) over the next five years. **Mr. Hoff** said that public and employee safety is the number one objective for the ITB. It is important that ITD continue its efficient operations.

Chairman Brackett asked if he had an update on the Targhee Pass. **Mr. Hoff** said that he drives through the pass occasionally, but he does not have specific information on the road itself.

Senator Winder commented that he was glad Mr. Hoff was willing to serve as he is a great addition to the ITB.

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

GUBERNATORIAL REAPPOINTMENT: **Chairman Brackett** welcomed Mike Pape, Administrator of ITD's Division of Aeronautics, and invited him to introduce Mark Sweeney to the Committee.

Mr. Pape said that it was his pleasure to introduce Mark Sweeney, who is the son of Bruce and Marilyn Sweeney. His father was a former legislator, ITB member, Air Force pilot, and famous University of Idaho track star (the 1956 Olympic trials). Mr. Sweeney has been serving on the Division of Aeronautics Advisory Board for two and a half terms. He is a professional pilot and a flight instructor. **Mr. Pape** asked that the Committee welcome Mark Sweeney.

Mr. Sweeney said he was a corporate pilot for Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories out of the Moscow-Pullman Airport. He has been flying jets for 18 years and has more than 12,000 hours of flight experience. He has really enjoyed serving on the Aeronautics Advisory Board. There are great people serving on it and the aeronautics staff is great to work with. He concluded by saying it has been a privilege to serve the State of Idaho, the aeronautics staff, and the other advisory board members.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Winder** thanked Mr. Sweeney for continuing his service. He asked him to talk about all the changes at Schweitzer Aviation over the 18 years he has worked there. **Mr. Sweeney** said the company has hired 15 pilots and they fly four Citations, manufactured by Cessna, that they fly all over the world. He said that Schweitzer Engineering is a worldwide operation with its primary offices in Pullman, Washington.

Senator Buckner-Webb asked what he saw as Idaho's aviation needs.

Mr. Sweeney thought that zoning protection for airports in urban areas from encroachment of housing projects was a very important concern. The backcountry airstrips are an Idaho jewel, but there is constant pressure to maintain access to them. He said there is a pilot shortage and he thought Idaho needed an aviation school. Maintaining Idaho's airports is important because of the economic impact to our state. **Senator Buckner-Webb** wondered if there is an impetus to make our airports larger, using the Sun Valley airport as an example. **Mr. Sweeney** said that Sun Valley's airport is in a cramped location and noise is also an issue. To move or expand an airport requires a huge economic commitment, but tourism is important to Idaho's economy.

TESTIMONY: **Chairman Brackett** recognized Roger Sorensen, Chairman of the Idaho Aeronautics Advisory Board, to testify in favor of the reappointment of Mr. Sweeney.

Mr. Sorensen said he met Mr. Sweeney from getting to know his father, who would attend some of the advisory board's meetings. He said that Mr. Sweeney has exhibited many of his father's traits: civic minded, courteous, well spoken, honest in his dealings, and has a genuine concern for the people his decisions and actions affect. Mr. Sweeney is well acquainted with the federal aviation regulations for pilots, aircraft, and airports. He concluded by saying he considered Mr. Sweeney a very valuable member of the advisory board.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Den Hartog** said she appreciated the experience and expertise this nominee brings to the advisory board. She told Mr. Sorensen that his testimony was greatly appreciated.

Chairman Brackett thanked Mr. Sweeney and Mr. Sorenson, and explained that the vote on Mr. Sweeney's reappointment would be taken at the next Committee meeting.

H 167 & H 168 **Chairman Brackett** invited Roy Eiguren, representing Amalgamated Sugar, to present **H 167** and **H 168**.

Mr. Eiguren said he would present the bills together. **H 167** is a consensus bill drafted by ITD and industry stakeholders. It eliminates obsolete language from Idaho Code related to the 129,000 gross vehicle weight (GVW) truck pilot project. As background, he said that in 1991, Congress enacted the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, which froze truck weights on the entire interstate highway system at the limits they were on June 1, 1991. Idaho's weight limit at that time was 105,000 GVW, but Montana, Wyoming, Utah, and Nevada were at 129,000 GVW. In 1998, the Idaho Legislature allowed two routes on state highways to accept vehicles weighing over 105,000 GVW. In 2003, the Idaho Legislature created a 16-route pilot project to test the effect of increasing the legal truck weights to 129,000 GVW on state highways. Over the next four years, the pilot project grew to 35 routes. In 2014, the pilot project ended and ITD was granted the ability to set routes on state highways.

H 168 is a true collaboration effort drafted by industry stakeholders that included: Ada County Highway District, Amalgamated Sugar, Association of Idaho Cities, Idaho Association of Counties, Idaho Association of Highway Districts, and the Idaho Trucking Association. Technical assistance was provided by ITD and the Local Highway Technical Assistance Council (LHTAC). **H 168** helps Idaho shippers solve issues that arise when trucks between 105,000 GVW and 129,000 GVW need to access highways and streets under local jurisdictions. It provides local control so that local jurisdictions make the decisions, and it provides an industry-funded solution that will help shippers move freight and continue to contribute to Idaho's economy.

Mr. Eiguren concluded saying the legislation becomes effective on July 1, 2019 and there is a two-year sunset clause because the stakeholders wanted to make sure it works. He asked the Committee to send **H 167** and **H 168** to the floor with a do pass recommendation.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Nelson** asked if a local highway district opened some routes but there were other routes they did not open up, would there be an appeal process to reconsider the unopened routes. **Mr. Eiguren** replied that Senator Nelson was correct, in that each route is separately handled.

Chairman Brackett thanked Mr. Eiguren and told him he deserved the credit for doing the heavy lifting on these bills.

MOTION: **Vice Chairman Crabtree** moved to send **H 167** and **H 168** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**. **Vice Chairman Crabtree** offered to carry both bills on the Senate floor.

AWARD PRESENTATION: **Chairman Brackett** announced there was one more item before adjourning. He invited Rick Waitley, representing Idaho Agriculture in the Classroom, to take the podium.

Mr. Waitley said it was his privilege to recognize a member of the Committee as the recipient of this year's Ag Advocate Award. He presented the award to Senator Jim Rice and thanked the Committee for allowing him to present it.

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

Senator Brackett
Chair

Gaye Bennett
Secretary