

MINUTES
SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

- DATE:** Tuesday, January 17, 2012
- TIME:** 1:30 P.M.
- PLACE:** Room WW53
- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Hammond, Vice Chairman Brackett, Senators Keough, McGee, Corder, Winder, Bair, Werk, and Bilyeu.
- ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** all present
- 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.
- CONVENE:** **Chairman Hammond** called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. The secretary took a silent roll. **The Chairman** welcomed the members of the Committee and the members of the audience to the first meeting of the Senate Transportation Committee this session. He proceeded to introduce the Committee's Page, Ben DeMordaunt of Eagle, and Intern, Eric Livermore, of Caldwell.
- The Chairman** turned to the two RS's before the Committee. As sponsor of one of the RS's, he turned the meeting over to **Vice Chairman Brackett**. **Vice Chairman Brackett** asked **Chairman Hammond** to present RS20863.
- RS20863:** **Chairman Hammond** said RS20863 equalizes speed limits for all vehicles on the highway. Its intent is to enhance safety by having all vehicles drive the same speed limit, thereby eliminating frequent lane changes that are currently necessary because of the differences in speed limits. There is no research showing this as a valid measure to enhance safety. The wording of the legislation states that the speed limit shall be the same as for all other motor vehicles. The other RS, sponsored by **Representative Hagedorn**, does the same thing in a slightly different manner. The reason the Committee is reviewing both is to determine which approach is preferred by the Committee. He requested that a vote on this RS be held until after **Representative Hagedorn** has presented his RS. **Vice Chairman Brackett** asked if there were any questions.
- QUESTIONS:** **Senator McGee** asked **Senator Corder** if he recalled a few years ago the discussion about a similar issue and if that discussion presents the same concerns. **Senator Corder** believes this would amend the same section of Idaho Code. In one of those previous efforts the discussion was for every vehicle to travel at 75 mph; and the second effort was at 70 mph, bringing the speed of cars down and the speed of trucks up.
- Senator Werk** asked that if the Committee moves forward with these RS's whether there will be experts available to advise the Committee about studies or background prior to voting. **Chairman Hammond** indicated that would occur.

Senator Corder asked if the Senator expected multi-axle trucks weighing more than twenty-thousand pounds to be travelling at 75 mph on the interstate. **Chairman Hammond** said that the maximum speed limit would be the same for all vehicles. **Senator Corder** stated there are a growing number of trucks that will not achieve 75 mph. They are limited by their computers and controls that keep them from exceeding current speeds because of the speed limits of neighboring States. Studies show that their best fuel consumption is about 63 mph, and it produces the least wear on tires. Trucks physically will not be able to reach 75 mph. **Chairman Hammond** recognized that there are vehicles that are governed technologically to not exceed a certain speed, and there are a number of farm vehicles that cannot reach that speed. This legislative change is still viewed as an opportunity to enhance safety, because the majority of vehicles will be travelling at a common speed. With no further questions, **Vice Chairman Brackett** asked **Representative Hagedorn** to present RS20893.

RS20893:

Representative Hagedorn stated that his bill is almost identical to **Chairman Hammond's** RS. This is an opportunity to get the State out of governing that which businesses would normally govern on their own, whether for technological capabilities or business-related decisions. Those reasons cannot be controlled. The legislature can change the need for a number of vehicles to move slower than the standard traffic, and that will eliminate some issues that have caused some accidents. The Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) will have data and will be asked to speak to those issues for whichever bill the Committee elects to print. **Representative Hagedorn** removed Section 49-654(3), Idaho Code, with the intent of eliminating any confusion for future speed changes. **Vice Chairman Brackett** asked for questions from the Committee.

QUESTIONS:

Senator Corder asked if it was understood that given some of those vehicles cannot achieve the new speed, there is no change in safety. It is correct that the interactions between the more rapid moving vehicles has always been the issue. **Representative Hagedorn** pointed out that there are also cars on the highway that are not able to travel at 75 mph. The more the interactions we can remove, the safer our roadways will be.

Senator McGee asked about the emergency clause, which is different than **Chairman Hammond's** bill, and what the thinking was behind including the clause. **Representative Hagedorn** said it is included because this RS presents a public safety issue. Instead of waiting until July 1, 2012, to implement, it seemed logical to implement it quickly.

Vice Chairman Brackett asked Molly McCarty, Governmental Affairs Manager for ITD, to comment on her observations of the two bills. Ms. McCarty stated that based on the results of the legislative outreach meetings, there is interest in this topic. ITD would have comments on this issue when there is a hearing on the printed legislation. There is information from ITD that could be useful. **Senator Hammond** asked if there was any comment on either draft. Ms. McCarty did not have a response at this time.

Senator Bilyeu asked if there would be an opportunity for an expert to provide information on the number of speeding tickets larger trucks have received in the past few years; and the number of accidents that can be attributed to the various speeds. Given the intent of the bill is to remove 65 mph speed limits for trucks and many cannot achieve that speed, the need for the legislation is questionable. **Vice Chairman Brackett** said that information would be requested for the hearing. The gavel was turned back to **Chairman Hammond**.

MOTION: **Chairman Hammond** recommended the Committee move forward with RS20863 because of the statement "shall be the same as for others" would remain in Idaho Code. **Senator Keough** moved that RS20863 be sent to print. **Senator McGee** seconded the motion. With no discussion on the motion, it passed by a unanimous voice vote.

Chairman Hammond asked for action on RS20893. With no action taken, RS20893 will remain in Committee.

PRESENTATION: **Chairman Hammond** introduced Nancy Merrill, Director of Idaho State Parks and Recreation (ISP&R).

Director Merrill introduced Department staff available for questioning following her presentation. ISP&R is an agency reinvented. They have had a general fund reduction resulting in fewer staff and more visitors. They have an increase in maintenance and services, therefore requiring them to look at new funding strategies.

As a result, they have gone through some fund-raising efforts, developed marketing and business plans, promotions, looked at operating mandates and staffing models. More is being directed to capital improvement, safety, and revenue generation; and they are seeking dedicated funding sources.

ISP&R has looked at other States and liked Michigan's successful State Parks Passport Program model. ISP&R wishes to implement a similar program in Idaho. The Director presented the program to the Committee. It is not a tax or a fee or related to motor vehicle registrations; it is a voluntary purchase of State Park admissions. There is no penalty for not participating. Idahoans would have a choice of participating when reregistering their vehicles by purchasing a ten-dollar State Parks Passport. There is legislation in the Idaho House of Representatives that is being considered. After showing an ISP&R video, the Director stood for questions.

QUESTIONS: **Chairman Hammond** commended the Director and ISP&R for their efforts to be more self-sustaining with this great opportunity for all Idahoans.

Senator McGee concurred with the Chairman's comments. He asked about the methodology used in determining the increase in the number of users. Director Merrill said ISP&R looked at Michigan's model and then conservatively decreased their estimates to 28%. Secondly, they did a survey of Idahoans and asked whether they would be inclined to buy a passport at the time of registering their vehicles; 73% said yes. Based on those two numbers, they dropped their numbers down to 20%. With no further questions, **Chairman Hammond** thanked the Director and her staff.

ADJOURNMENT: **Chairman Hammond** adjourned the meeting at 2:05 p.m.

Senator Hammond
Chairman

Gaye Bennett
Secretary