

MINUTES
SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

- DATE:** Thursday, March 15, 2012
- TIME:** 1:30 P.M.
- PLACE:** Room WW53
- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Hammond, Vice Chairman Brackett, Senators Keough, Corder, Bair, Rice, and Bilyeu
- ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** Senators Winder and Werk
- 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. and asked the secretary to take a silent roll. The Chairman welcomed Idaho Transportation Board (ITB) Chairman, Jerry Whitehead, to the Committee to introduce Julie D. DeLorenzo's appointment to the ITB.
- GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT:** ITB Chairman Whitehead stated that Ms. DeLorenzo is a long-time resident of Idaho. She is replacing his position on the ITB. He stated that she had been to her first Board meeting and that she was becoming familiar with the Department. He is certain she will do a good job and be a good fit for the Board. He recommends that she be confirmed.
- Chairman Hammond** welcomed Ms. DeLorenzo to the Committee and asked her to share some of her background. She said she was raised in a small community on the Oregon coast where she lived until she was 23; she then moved to Idaho. She has lived in the Boise area for about 30 years. She has a strong understanding of the diversity and needs of a small rural community and how differing they are from larger communities. She comes from a long line of entrepreneurs. Her father and grandfather owned and operated logging operations and farms. As a realtor, she is very proud to be able to help put people in homes. She gets to see home ownership coming true every day. She is married, has one child, and three 'bonus' daughters and 'bonus' grandsons. Ms. DeLorenzo stood for questions.
- QUESTIONS:** **Chairman Hammond** asked what she saw as the major issues facing her as she moves forward on the ITB. Ms. DeLorenzo said there were two issues: (1) the aging transportation system they are faced with; and (2) the funding challenges that they are also faced with. Idaho is one of the few States in the nation that does not have a major highway running North between two large metropolitan areas. That is a significant challenge for commerce, safety, and efficiency for our State.

Senator Corder thanked her for agreeing to become a member of the ITB. He noticed that she is a Democrat but has served as a federal political coordinator for U.S. Senator Larry Craig and now for U.S. Congressman Raul Labrador. He was curious what that entails. Ms. DeLorenzo said she is basically a liaison between the realtor members in the State of Idaho and the Congressional Delegation. She had also served in that capacity for former Congressman Walt Minnick. **Senator Corder** said while imminently qualified for real estate business community involvement, he was curious about her qualifications for infrastructure and highways; and how big she thinks the learning curve is for her. Ms. DeLorenzo said she attended her first Board meeting yesterday and thinks Director Ness is doing a great job. She is very involved in the community and understands how transportation affects our economy. She's looking forward to working with the Board and the legislature to further their efforts. **Senator Corder** asked if she's given any thought to increasing the funding for roads. Ms. DeLorenzo said she had and that it will not be an easy task. There are real challenges before us in the State of Idaho for funding our transportation system. It is critical the system provides a safe and efficient way of moving people around; and it is critical that we get our products to market. Those are huge issues. Idaho is in a unique position of having two-thirds of its land as public land, and the 39th State in population. It's a small population that has to fund the system. We don't know what the federal government is going to be doing with their package. Doing nothing is not an option. The gas tax has not been increased since the mid-nineties. GARVEE funding is nearly used up and it doesn't look like there will be an expansion, but we have to address failing roads and bridges. **Senator Corder** suggested that she must have had a lot of experience in working with the Ada County Highway District (ACHD). It is a unique entity unlike all the other highway districts. He asked if she's given any thought about what that relationship would look like in the future. Ms. DeLorenzo said she has not worked with ACHD. **Senator Corder** suggested that since her work experience is in Ada County, he assumed she had some knowledge of that entity. Ms. DeLorenzo is looking forward to becoming more educated on that. **Senator Corder** asked if she viewed her job as focusing on the State system or as focusing on a broader system. Ms. DeLorenzo said that while she was appointed to District 3, she will be making decisions that affect the entire State, and that is where she will focus. There were no further questions.

Chairman Hammond thanked Ms. DeLorenzo for appearing before the Committee. The Committee will vote on her appointment at the next meeting. The Chairman thanked her for her willingness to serve on the Committee. Ms. DeLorenzo said it was a pleasure and an honor to have been considered for this appointment.

MINUTES:

Chairman Hammond called for a motion on the minutes of the February 9, 2012, Senate Transportation Committee meeting. **Senator Bilyeu** moved that the Committee approve the minutes of February 9th. **Vice Chairman Brackett** seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by a unanimous voice vote.

Chairman Hammond called for a motion on the minutes of the February 14, 2012, Senate Transportation Committee meeting. **Senator Bair** moved that the Committee approve the minutes of February 14th. **Vice Chairman Brackett** seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by a unanimous voice vote.

Chairman Hammond welcomed Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) Director Brian Ness to the Committee to introduce Maureen Gresham, ITD's Freight Coordinator.

INTRODUCTION: Director Ness said that the purpose of the Freight Study is to identify policies, programs and investments within the State's transportation network that will facilitate the efficient movement of freight over State transportation systems, improve safety, and support economic development at the State and local levels. Data from the study will also be used to update the State's Freight and Passenger Rail Plan. The plan update will help develop and preserve essential freight and passenger rail services in Idaho, set public and private sector priorities, and guide investments and policy or program changes. The study is expected to be completed in November, 2012.

The Director said that Maureen Gresham brings seventeen years of experience in transportation planning, program management, policy/project development, and public involvement to her management of Idaho's Freight Study and Rail Plan update. She came to ITD from Atlanta, Georgia, two years ago. She has worked at all levels of government including local, regional, and State, as well as in the private sector at an international private engineering and planning firm. Ms. Gresham received her undergraduate degree from Appalachian State University and her Masters in City Planning from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

PRESENTATION: Ms. Gresham began her presentation with an overview. ITD has initiated a study of the statewide multi-modal freight network to address current and future freight movement needs. The purpose is to identify policies, programs, and investments within the State's transportation network and institutional framework that will facilitate mobility, improve safety, and support economic development initiatives at the State and local level.

The scope of the study addresses truck, rail, air, and water freight movements into and out of Idaho by inventorying and analyzing the physical infrastructure, condition, and operations of the multi-modal system, testing various investments strategies, and developing performance measures that can be used to evaluate the viability and cost of investments and policy/programmatic recommendations.

The results of the study will be used to prioritize needed policy and programmatic changes as well as lay a foundation for individual modal (highway, rail, airport, and port) system plans to identify and prioritize needed investments.

ITD is hiring a consultant team to conduct this study. The consultants and ITD staff will be coordinating the entire effort with a wide array of stakeholders including freight railroads, Amtrak, trucking industry, airports, freight shippers, Port of Lewiston, existing and potential inter-modal facility stakeholders, other State agencies, regional planning and economic development organizations, MPOs, State and local advocacy groups, local governments, adjacent States, environmental interests, other modal interests, and the public, especially those with an interest in freight movement.

ITD is also updating the 1996 Idaho State Rail Plan. The primary objective of this update is to identify, evaluate and encourage the development and preservation of essential freight and passenger rail and inter-modal freight services. The rail plan is necessary to meet federal requirements and will enable the State to competitively compete for national rail related funding opportunities. The plan provides Idaho the opportunity to facilitate and participate in a rail transportation system allowing commodity-based companies to move products efficiently, expanding business opportunity, and generating the need for increased jobs. This project is being developed in concert with the Idaho Freight Study, both to leverage federal funds but also to increase coordination of modal infrastructure investments. ITD is using the same consultant team and stakeholder plan. Ms. Gresham stood for questions.

QUESTIONS:

Senator Corder made a comment that he had attended the forum and thought it was well conducted and that she had done a great job. It was certainly worth the time just to have everyone in the room.

Senator Bilyeu asked about available federal grants. Ms. Gresham said the grant money they received was a Federal Railroad Administration grant to complete the rail plan. When they are finished they will be able to see what other grant opportunities are out there, and there is talk about reauthorization and creating a freight program. **Senator Bilyeu** asked for more information about how a rail plan could take place in Idaho and if passenger rail is being looked at as well. Ms. Gresham said that they are looking at passenger rail. There is some passenger rail in Sandpoint, but the possibility of future passenger rail in other areas of the State are not as high. All the short line rails involved in the steering committee are bringing their expansion issues to the table and trying to build on what the trucking industry is doing in building a system to be more efficient.

Chairman Hammond thanked Ms. Gresham for her presentation and that she had done a great job.

ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Committee, **Chairman Hammond** adjourned the meeting at 1:55 p.m.

Senator Hammond
Chairman

Gaye Bennett
Secretary