

MINUTES
SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Thursday, February 26, 2015

- TIME:** 1:30 P.M.
- PLACE:** Room WW53
- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Brackett, Vice Chairman Nonini, Senators Keough, Winder, Hagedorn, Vick, Den Hartog, Buckner-Webb and Lacey
- 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:** **Chairman Brackett** called the meeting of the Senate Transportation Committee (Committee) to order at 1:31 p.m. and welcomed everyone.
- MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Vice Chairman Nonini** made a motion to approve the Minutes of February 17, 2015. **Senator Keough** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.
- PRESENTATION:** **Chairman Brackett** welcomed Jeff Miles, the Interim Administrator of the Local Highway Technical Assistance Council (LHTAC), and Don Ebert, LHTAC Council Chair, to the Committee and invited them to begin their presentation.
- Mr. Ebert** thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak on behalf of LHTAC. He serves as the chairman of LHTAC and, for the past 12 years, has also served as a Clearwater County Commissioner.
- LHTAC represents 288 local jurisdictions and has existed for 20 years. The council is made up of nine voting members; three each from counties, cities and highway districts. There are ex-officio members as well representing stakeholder groups. The council approves all LHTAC full-time positions, accepts programs from the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), and ranks construction projects in order to make recommendations to the Idaho Transportation Board (ITB).
- With recent changes in administration, LHTAC needs data on what they do well, what they should do better and how they can improve fulfilling their mission. To accomplish that, they hired an inexpensive outside consultant to gauge how they are perceived by their peers and their customers. LHTAC's council board has also directed staff to engage in self-assessment and suggest possible efficiencies and cost-savings. As an example, **Mr. Ebert** offered the way LHTAC replaces small bridges. The way a bridge is designed and constructed costs an incomprehensible amount of money and involves a complex process. The Idaho Department of Lands could replace that same bridge with a prefabricated unit installed by a logging contractor in a few days. The differences are because of required, established regulations and a mindset of that is how it has always been done. As a result, LHTAC has gotten permission to use the same design for any bridge within certain size parameters; they believe this change will save hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Mr. Ebert said that another goal is to find ways LHTAC can be more responsive and more efficient. Their goal is to make the right changes, and their intent is to be courageous in their pursuit of new ways to do business. He closed by stating that LHTAC plans on being confident enough to assert that they do some things well, humble enough to know they need to do some things better, and honest enough to look within their organization to see the truth about themselves, and the changes they need to make. **Mr. Ebert** thanked the Committee and stood for questions. There were no questions for Mr. Ebert.

Mr. Miles took the podium and said that LHTAC was formed by the Legislature in 1994 to elevate the importance of local highway issues and to provide assistance to them. He went through a brief timeline of the programs LHTAC assumed and their responsibilities since inception. Before LHTAC existed, only 61 percent of local projects were constructed. There were years where no city projects made it to construction. In 2001, LHTAC accepted ITD's federal aid responsibilities, and all eligible projects have made it to construction.

Mr. Miles said that LHTAC is the most efficient and balanced way to get federal dollars to local jurisdictions. Their base funding amounts to about one-third of one percent of the local jurisdiction's share of the Highway Distribution Account (HDA) funds. In 2014 LHTAC received approximately \$391,000 from the HDA funds.

LHTAC's goal is to advocate, support and train. They have 22 approved, full-time positions that administer programs and ensure federal requirements are met as stipulated in the Stewardship Agreement with ITD. In 1994, when LHTAC was first created by the Legislature, the sole responsibility of staff was to provide technical assistance and advocate for the interest of local jurisdictions. 2001 was the initial year of federal funds administration. The number of staff has increased as LHTAC accepted additional programs and responsibilities from ITD. All permanent staff increases are approved by LHTAC's council.

LHTAC advocates for local jurisdictions. They provide technical assistance to every local jurisdiction, no matter their size. They continue to strengthen their partnerships with agencies, associations and local entities. They collaborate to streamline processes; they find ways to incorporate innovation; and, they compile and disseminate data. Through the stewardship agreement with ITD, they administer federal funds to local projects. No services are duplicated between the two agencies. Currently, only LHTAC and the Ada County Highway District (ACHD) can administer federal transportation funds in the State. To date, LHTAC has administered 142 construction projects.

The Local Rural Highway Investment Program (LRHIP) exchanges federal funds for State funds to be awarded through grants. Grant applications are scored by the council. Local jurisdictions receive the funds, administer the projects and report upon completion. Those funds are available to help rural jurisdictions with construction projects, sign upgrades, transportation plans and small emergency projects. Since 2004, LHTAC has awarded 443 projects totaling \$28 million.

In 2011, LHTAC negotiated with ITD to create a new program to address safety issues on the local system. It is the Local Highway Safety Improvement Program. 2014 was the first construction year for applications distributed in 2011. Funds from this program are aimed at reducing fatal and serious injury crashes on the local road system. Applications are data driven and are ranked based on a cost/benefit ratio. Projects can range from small signage improvements to signal or shoulder widening projects. Over the last 5 years, 49 percent of fatal and serious injury crashes occurred on local highway systems. LHTAC administers close to \$3.9 million annually for the design and construction of safety projects.

In 2009, LHTAC began providing training for all local highway jurisdictions through its T2 Center that offers two levels of certification programs: (1) the Road Scholar; and (2) the Road Master. Class topics cover maintenance, new technologies, safety and professional development. To date LHTAC has awarded 250 Road Scholars and 91 Road Masters.

LHTAC also publishes and distributes Technical News, the LHTAC Times and other pertinent publications. LHTAC prides itself on providing efficient assistance to each and every local highway jurisdiction in Idaho. **Mr. Miles** thanked the Committee and stood for questions.

Senator Vick asked Mr. Miles to go to the slide depicting a bar graph of the funds administered over the years. He wanted to know if those represented new funding or if another entity had administered them before LHTAC existed. **Mr. Miles** said that some had been administered by ITD, some by the University of Idaho and some by the Governor's office when an emergency is called. **Senator Vick** asked for the origin of the funds for safety programs. **Mr. Miles** said those are federal funds administered through the Move Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) appropriation that allowed increased funding to be spread into local jurisdictions.

Chairman Brackett asked for clarification on the number of employees at LHTAC. **Mr. Miles** said there were 22 full-time employees of which one position was vacant; there are occasional part-time employees during heavy workload seasons, all of which are approved by the council.

Senator Hagedorn inquired about the funding slide and why it states that LHTAC administered \$24 million in 2014, but their annual report indicates only \$4.5 million for the same period. **Mr. Miles** said the total budget includes local highway funds given through local highway grants where programs are covered through reimbursement. The base is enhanced by other funds that are run through projects.

Senator Lacey commented on the cover of the annual report. It is a beautiful area of Pocatello where he has run many times. He said the sources of funding are confusing and wanted to know the amount of funds that they directly administer and if they then distributed them to projects. **Mr. Miles** said the funds are managed through ITD who processes and distributes payment. Other program funds come directly to LHTAC, and the projects awarded funding are distributed directly by LHTAC.

Senator Hagedorn, referring to the LHTAC annual report, asked what percentage of the \$5.8 million revenue was distributed to local jurisdictions and what percentage went to LHTAC's administrative costs. **Mr. Miles** said that he was not certain of the percentage, but annual staff wages are about \$900,000. He said he would send that information to the Committee.

Chairman Brackett asked Mr. Miles to elaborate on the T2 Program. **Mr. Miles** said it is partially funded with federal dollars and partially funded through a dollar match. The courses are made available across the State culminating in a Road Scholar award and a Road Master award. There is an advisory group that oversees the program. T2's most popular programs are the maintenance program and the local construction work program. There were no further questions for Mr. Miles.

Chairman Brackett thanked Mr. Miles and Mr. Ebert and recognized the other LHTAC council members in the audience. He extended an invitation for comment, but they declined. In closing, **Mr. Ebert** wanted the Committee to know that the employees of LHTAC are dedicated, hard working and top notch. He appreciated the opportunity to comment.

H 70: **Chairman Brackett** welcomed Jerry Deckard of CapitolWest Public Policy Group to the podium to present **H 70**. **Mr. Deckard** thanked the Committee and said he was representing the Associated Logging Contractors of Idaho.

Mr. Deckard said **H 70** offers a minor change to the methods in determining the steering axle tire loads; it has been endorsed by truckers. It provides that tire manufacturers' rating for steering axle tires can be used to determine the load rating for those tires only. The bill does not change the maximum load rating for the steering axle that is set at 20,000 pounds. The bill is merely a technical addition to the formula for determining the 600 pounds per square inch by the steering axle tires on pavement. **Mr. Deckard** stood for questions.

Senator Hagedorn wanted to know what prompted the change. **Mr. Deckard** said that there has been an ongoing discussion about some manufacturers meeting the same tire width to fit for the 600 pounds per square inch requirement. Truckers relied on a certain manufacturer's tire, so the tire manufacturers met with ITD to work out a solution.

TESTIMONY: **Alan Frew**, ITD's Division of Motor Vehicles Administrator, offered testimony explaining the situation and how the solution was determined. There were no questions for Mr. Frew.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: **Senator Keough** disclosed a possible conflict of interest with this legislation as she works for the Associated Logging Contractors.

MOTION: **Senator Nonini** moved that **H 70** be sent to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Winder** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**. **Senator Nonini** offered to carry the bill on the floor.

ADJOURNED: **Chairman Brackett** thanked Mr. Deckard and adjourned the meeting at 2:04 p.m.

Senator Brackett
Chair

Gaye Bennett
Secretary