

MINUTES
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION & DEFENSE COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, March 04, 2025

TIME: 1:30 P.M. or Upon Adjournment

PLACE: Room EW40

MEMBERS: Chairman Palmer, Vice Chairman Mitchell, Representatives Holtzclaw, Monks, Shepherd, Crane(12), Handy, Hill, Petzke, Boyle, Clow, Harris, Mickelsen, Pohanka, Gannon, Green

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None

GUESTS: The sign-in sheet will be retained in the committee secretary's office; following the end of session the sign-in sheet will be filed with the minutes in the Legislative Library.

Chairman Mitchell called the meeting to order at 1:30pm.

MOTION: **Rep. Gannon** made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 20, 24, and 26, 2025 meetings. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

H 326: **Rep. Palmer**, District 20, stated this legislation will add two additional highway district commissioners to the current five for the Ada County Highway District (ACHD), the only single county-wide highway district out of over 300 highway districts in the state. One of the two new commissioners will be appointed by the Board of County Commissioners and the other by the Governor. He explained, over the last several years he has received many complaints regarding bad roads and highways and people are feeling like they aren't being adequately represented. He stated, he has been able to address some of the road issues through legislation to send additional money from sales tax to the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) and local highway districts, and is continuing to update those amounts as needed. He commented, he would like to see the ACHD commissioners move towards a more professional commission where there is criteria required to have a background in the transportation field. He explained, currently, the commissioners represent zones, but some of the zones feel less represented than others. He would like to see mayors and city councils have the opportunity to weigh in and have more authority rather than being left out of the process in some situations.

In response to a committee question regarding the new appointed commissioners residency, **Rep. Palmer** answered the commissioners are required to reside in Ada County. In response to a committee question regarding will these two commissioners always be appointed, or when their terms end, will they be elected, Rep. Palmer answered these two positions will always be appointed.

Lisa Hecht, Boise resident, representing herself; **Joleen Evans**, Boise resident, representing herself; **Robert Elliot**, Boise resident, representing himself; **Beth Norton**, Boise resident, representing herself; **Devin McCombs**, Boise resident, representing Boise Bicycle Project; **Logan Rutt**, Boise resident, representing himself; **Abigail Morgan**, Boise resident, representing herself; **Donald Schaff**, Boise resident, representing himself; **Elias Willerup**, Boise resident, representing himself; **Emily Boydstrum**, Boise resident, representing herself; **Mary Ruckh**, Boise resident, representing herself; and **Erik Olson**, Boise resident, representing himself, all spoke **in opposition** to **H 326**. They were of the opinion this legislation is not necessary because the current ACHD commissioners are elected and adequately represent them. They believe this is state government overreach and will take away local control. They stated the commissioners are non-partisan and

should remain that way, but with this change it will weaken the decision making process because the people being appointed might not be as invested as those who campaigned and won elections.

John Evans, Mayor, Garden City, stated although he agrees with **Rep. Palmer's** comment about wanting to have more input from cities, he spoke **in opposition** to **H 326** stating his preference would be for Ada County to not have a separately elected commission, but rather follow the governance model. This would be under the county umbrella via the joint powers agreement, which is a more efficient system and would eliminate extra layers of bureaucracy.

Ryan Head, Director, ACHD, spoke **in opposition** to **H 326**. He stated there seems to be no justification for this change, there is no public outcry for change, and there are no problems needing to be fixed. He continued, there have not been any problems coordinating projects between ITD, the county, and the highway district, and provided an example regarding the Eckert Road bridge closure. He also stated there is an error in the Fiscal Note; it should show the cost to fund two new commissioners (salaries, benefits, PERSI, etc.) at approximately \$150,000, which is ten times the amount stated.

Rep. Palmer stood and closed. He stated he appreciates ACHD; they are a professional and top notch staff, but ACHD covers more than just Boise. He wants there to be a better way to represent the entire highway district, and because ACHD is a one-of-a-kind district, it can be challenging to come up with the best method to move forward. He explained, currently, the make up of ACHD is not non-partisan. This legislation will only be adding two new commissioners to the existing five in order to try and help balance the control of decisions on where money goes for projects. He remarked, just because people in Boise don't hear about issues in other parts of the highway district, doesn't mean they don't exist.

Rep. Palmer addressed the lingering committee concern regarding the residency requirement for the newly appointed commissioners. He said it is inferred on page 1, beginning on line 27. He also stated he believed the residency requirement was already covered in existing statute.

MOTION:

Rep. Crane (12) made a motion to send **H 326** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION:

Rep. Gannon made a substitute motion to send **H 326** to General Orders. He remarked, the residency requirement should be stated more clearly for the two appointed commissioners.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST:

Rep. Green made a unanimous consent request to abstain from voting due to a conflict of interest with her current employment. There being no objection, the request was granted.

VOTE ON SUBSTITUTE MOTION:

Chairman Mitchell called for a vote on the substitute motion to send **H 326** to General Orders. **Motion failed by voice vote.**

VOTE ON ORIGINAL MOTION:

Chairman Mitchell called for a vote on the original motion to send **H 326** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Clow and Gannon** requested to be recorded as voting **NAY**. **Rep. Palmer** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:26pm.

Representative Mitchell
Chair

Tracey McDonnell
Secretary