

MINUTES  
**SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Tuesday, March 03, 2026

**TIME:** 1:30 P.M.

**PLACE:** Room WW53

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Okuniewicz, Vice Chairman Keyser, Senators Burtenshaw, Hart, Bruner (Adams), Galloway, Kohl, Rabe, and Semmelroth

**ABSENT/ EXCUSED:**

**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 Okuniewicz** called the meeting of the Senate Transportation Committee (Committee) to order at 1:30 p.m.

**GUBERNATORIAL VOTE:** **Committee Consideration of the Gubernatorial Appointment Vote of Gaston Patterson to the Aeronautics Advisory Board, for a term commencing January 31, 2026 and expiring January 31, 2031.**

**MOTION:** **Senator Kohl** moved to send the Gubernatorial Appointment of Gaston Patterson to the Aeronautics Advisory Board to the floor with recommendation that he be confirmed by the Senate. **Vice Chairman Keyser** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Rabe** moved to approve the Minutes of February 24, 2026. **Senator Semmelroth** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**S 1340** **RULES OF THE ROAD - Amends existing law to require drivers to drive in the right-hand lane on multilane highways unless passing and to provide penalties for driving in the left-hand lane of a controlled access highway and impeding the flow of traffic.** **Senator Harris** explained that the bill was a traffic flow and traffic safety measure aimed at addressing common-sense driving issues frequently encountered by Idaho drivers, particularly on multi-lane highways. He stated that the bill amended Section 49-630 to require drivers to remain in the right-hand lane except when passing. It also amended Section 49-655 to create specific provisions governing traffic in the left lane on controlled-access highways.

**Senator Harris** emphasized that the legislation was intended to improve traffic flow and reduce dangerous situations caused by drivers remaining in the left lane and impeding traffic. He noted that he frequently observed crashes or near misses resulting from vehicles attempting to pass on the right when slower drivers occupied the left lane. **Senator Harris** informed the Committee that minor revisions had been brought to his attention. He requested the bill be sent to the 14th Order for amendment. The proposed changes included clarifying language on line 26 regarding passing another vehicle and addressing concerns about the term "congested."

**DISCUSSION:** **Chairman Okuniewicz** asked Senator Harris whether any other law enforcement entities had spoken with him about the bill, such as the Association of Chiefs or the Fraternal Order of Police. **Senator Harris** responded that similar laws had been enacted in other states, but this was unique to Idaho. He explained that in those states, signage such as "Passing Lane Only" was commonly posted to reinforce the requirement.

**Senator Kohl** asked whether the bill would also apply in situations where a driver, who was traveling faster than surrounding traffic, remained in the left lane for an extended period while gradually passing other vehicles, how the bill would address that circumstance and what enforcement would look like in that scenario. **Senator Harris** responded that if someone was traveling in the passing lane and there was no vehicle behind them, the situation would generally not present an issue.

**TESTIMONY:** **Michael Kane**, AAA Idaho, testified in support of **S 1340**. He described the dangers of passing long lines of vehicles on the freeway, particularly between Boise and Twin Falls. He explained that situations could become hazardous when a semi-truck suddenly moved in front of a vehicle and slowed down, especially if another vehicle was approaching quickly from behind. He stated he had approached Senator Harris with suggested language changes and believed he had resolved a few concerns through minor tweaks. He noted that Senator Harris had agreed to those adjustments and also requested that the bill be sent to the 14th Order of business for possible amendment.

**Matthew Conde**, AAA Idaho, stated that clarity in the law translated directly to safety. He said that with the proposed language and the recommended tweaks, he believed the bill would achieve that goal. He specifically referenced replacing the word "congested" with the phrase "obstructed by vehicles traveling below the speed limit" to provide greater clarity. He explained this change would help avoid confusion in situations involving heavy traffic, such as between Boise and Nampa, where all lanes might be full.

**MOTION:** **Senator Semmelroth** moved to send **S 1340** to the 14th Order of Business for possible amendment. **Senator Hart** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**NOTE:** **Chairman Okuniewicz** moved on to **H 532** to await Senator Nichols' arrival.

**H 532** **TRANSPORTATION - Amends existing law to provide for a certain manner of proving identity.** Josh Thyer, Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV), Policy Manager, explained that the bill established uniform identity verification standards across DMV services and reinforced the principle of "one person, one record" by consolidating identity verification requirements for driver's licenses and motor vehicle services into a single statute. He noted as DMV records and services became more integrated in county offices with increasing functions, the bill would ensure consistent identity verification for applications and related processes. **Chairman Okuniewicz** asked Mr. Thyer to provide an example of a problem that currently existed which **H 532** was intended to solve. **Mr. Thyer** explained under current statute, identity validation for motor vehicle services required only a form of identification with a photo ID and legal name, which was a lower standard than that required for obtaining a driver's license. He provided an example of an out-of-state individual presenting an expired driver's license. He stated that **H 532** would align the standards across DMV services to prevent fraud and ensure that the DMV accurately verified the identity of individuals accessing its offices.

**MOTION:** **Senator Kohl** moved to send **H 532** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Vice Chairman Keyser** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**S 1287**

**HIGHWAYS - Amends existing law to revise provisions regarding rights-of-way.** **Senator Hart** explained **S 1287** was inspired by three constituents from his district who had encountered court proceedings related to the abandonment validation process. Despite their cases, he noted that there remained vagueness in that section of Idaho Code, including among county commissioners he had worked with. **Senator Hart** stated that he introduced the bill to clarify the relevant code section, gather feedback from interested parties, and develop a stronger legislative proposal. He emphasized that the bill was not ready to advance to the floor and requested that it be sent to the 14th Order for amendment.

**DISCUSSION:**

**Senator Semmelroth** asked about the fiscal note, noting that it indicated the legislation would affect counties and highway districts but not state operations, and inquired how counties and highway districts were funded. **Senator Harris** explained that counties and highway districts were typically taxing districts with their own taxing authority. While some state funds flowed to them, there was no mandate from the State regarding their funding.

**TESTIMONY:**

**Ben Weymouth**, East Side Highway District, explained that the district was responsible for 242 miles of local roads and noted that while there were aspects of the bill they supported, there were several significant issues. His primary concern was the requirement for a public hearing for any right-of-way actions. He stated that, as written, the language appeared to mandate hearings in all cases, which could add considerable time, cost, and bureaucracy, despite the district already being statutorily required to accept right-of-way matters at a public meeting. He supported including a survey or other exhibits to clarify records, but noted that even this could increase costs beyond what was necessary to meet the bill's intent.

**Susan Weeks**, representing multiple highway districts and counties, raised concerns about the bill. She noted that requiring public hearings could disrupt the eminent domain process, increase costs for surveys and right-of-way acquisitions, and delay development for plats and dedications. She emphasized that transparency was already addressed in existing statutes and requested that the language, particularly regarding validations and donations, be clarified and made more precise.

**Steve Price**, General Council, Ada County Highway District (ACHD), testified in opposition to the bill. He explained that Idaho's public right-of-way law, in place for 133 years, recognized prescriptive easements and required adherence to the law at the time of dedication. He stated the bill would effectively override this long-standing doctrine.

**Mr. Price** highlighted that requiring public hearings, rather than public meetings, would be costly and time-consuming, particularly for urban districts like Ada County, which processed hundreds of dedications annually. He also noted that the bill's survey requirements would be expensive, as legal descriptions were needed for multiple types of roadway acquisitions. He referenced prior work in 2013, which strengthened the official map process to provide public notice and legal basis for designations, ensuring appeal rights and preventing arbitrary claims. **Mr. Price** concluded that the proposed bill contained internal inconsistencies and would significantly disrupt 133 years of public right-of-way law.

**MOTION:**

**Senator Burtenshaw** moved that **S 1287** be held in Committee subject to the call of the Chair. **Senator Semmelroth** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Semmelroth** requested as stakeholders worked on revisions, they took a closer look at the fiscal note. Based on the testimony of Mr. Weymouth and Mr. Price, they noted that the proposed changes would result in additional costs for highway districts. While these districts were tax-funded, they also received state dollars, so the bill, if left unchanged, would have a fiscal impact.

**H 663** **LICENSE PLATES - Amends existing law to revise provisions regarding agriculture license plates.** **Senator Nichols** explained that the bill simply moved the design authority for the Idaho Agricultural license plate from food producers to Idaho Agriculture in the Classroom. The food producers were unaware they had design responsibilities and did not want that role. The funds from the license plate would continue to go to Idaho Agriculture in the Classroom. She noted the design update was planned for the future, not immediately.

**TESTIMONY:** **Cassidey Plum**, Director, Idaho Agriculture in the Classroom, testified in support of **H 663**. She explained that Idaho Agriculture in the Classroom was a nonprofit organization focused on enhancing agricultural literacy among K–12 students by providing educators with resources. She outlined three key programs: classroom grants, which were expanded under her leadership to fund hands-on agricultural projects; teacher workshops, which took educators to farms for firsthand experience; and a curriculum matrix offering over 500 lesson plans that integrated agriculture into core subjects. **Ms. Plum** emphasized that 75% of the organization's funding came from the agricultural license plate program. She stated that the bill would transfer design authority for the plate from food producers—who were unaware they had the responsibility and supported the change—to the Agriculture in the Classroom board of directors.

**MOTION:** **Senator Hart** moved to send **H 663** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Kohl** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Okuniewicz** adjourned the meeting at 2:07 p.m.

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Senator Okuniewicz  
Chair

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Melissa Price  
Secretary