

MINUTES

SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION, TECHNOLOGY & LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION Friday, January 27, 2012

The Senate Interim Committee on Transportation, Technology and Legislative Affairs, and the House Interim Committee on Public Transportation, met jointly at 9:00 a.m., Friday, January 27, 2012, in Room B, MAC Building, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Committee members in attendance: Senators David Wyatt, Vice Chair; Mike Fletcher and Missy Irvin; Representatives Jonathan Barnett, Chair; Denny Altes, Lori Benedict, John Catlett, Bruce Cozart, Mary "Prissy" Hickerson, Jon Hubbard, Loy Mauch, David Meeks, Leslee Milam Post, David J. Sanders, Gary Stubblefield and Tommy Thompson. Non-Voting Committee members in attendance: Representative Terry Rice.

Other members in attendance: Representatives Jerry Brown, Billy Gaskill, Buddy Lovell, James Ratliff and Gary L. Smith.

Representative Barnett called the meeting to order.

Remarks by Committee Chairman

Representative Barnett thanked everyone for their attendance. He introduced Mr. Scott Bennett, Director, Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department, to begin his presentation.

Presentation on I-430/I-630 Interchange Project

Mr. Scott Bennett, Director, Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department, introduced Frank Vozel, Deputy Director and Chief Engineer; Emanuel Banks, Assistant Chief Engineer for Operations; Randy Ort and Glen Bolick, Public Affairs; Mark Hedley, District Construction Engineer and Dan Burnett, Resident Engineer. Mr. Bennett also recognized Highway Commissioner Tom Schueck. Mr. Bennett advised that today's tour will be guided by Don Weaver and Brad Friar of Weaver-Bailey Contractors.

Mr. Bennett gave a presentation on the I-430/I-630 Interchange Improvement Project and cited the I-430 traffic volume as approximately 100,000 per day, and on I-630 over 100,000 vehicles per day. On I-630 three contracts will complete the interchange. The first contract was for \$17 million to widen the ramp from I-630 westbound to I-430 northbound. The second contract for \$19 million was to replace and lengthen I-430 bridges to prepare for more lanes underneath I-430. The third contract, Phase III, was a partnership between Reeder-Bailey and Manhattan Road and Bridge Contractors for \$91 million for a "fly over" or overpasses. This will also eliminate the traffic signal at Shackleford Road. Estimated cost for this project is \$150 million and should be open to traffic in 2014. When completed, this will be a four level interchange with I-630 at the bottom and I-430 will be on top. The ramp from I-430 southbound to I-630 eastbound will be the next level and the ramp from I-630 westbound to I-430 southbound will be at the very top. Part of the aesthetics include the outline of the state of Arkansas, with retaining wall panels featuring pine trees and pine cones to honor the state tree.

Mr. Bennett said the concept of the project began in 2004 with the average time for a project this size ranging from 13-17 years. Mr. Bennett also said that before the project began, the Highway Department received the 2008 Transportation Planning Excellence Award from the Federal Highway Administration Federal Transit Administration.

Representative Thompson asked about the number of Arkansas contractors and subcontractors involved in this project. Mr. Bennett said Bridge Farm and Associates, the design firm, partnered with an Arkansas firm. The first phase of construction was awarded to Weaver-Bailey Contractors, an Arkansas contractor. The second phase was awarded to Kewit, an out of state contractor, but many Arkansas subcontractors were used. The last phase is a joint venture between Weaver-Bailey Contractors and Manhattan Road and Bridge Contractors. Representative Smith asked Mr. Bennett to clarify why Arkansas contractors may not always get the bid on highway projects. Mr. Bennett said whenever a project is advertised for bids, every contractor has to look at it in terms of availability of their crew and appropriate heavy equipment or their ability to do the work. The state requires the contracts be awarded to the lowest qualified bidder. Representative Hickerson asked if there would be permanent electronic warning signs built into the project. Mr. Bennett said there are permanent electronic signs on either end of I-430 with several around central Arkansas. The signs were funded as part of the Emergency Evacuation Plan at the Pine Bluff Arsenal and have since been donated to the Highway Department.

Senator Irvin questioned the effect of the project on other work being done across the state. Mr. Bennett replied that this project will have no effect on other projects around the state. There may be a slight impact once Phase III gets underway. However, outside firms will be hired to help.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:39 a.m. for the tour of the I-430/I-630 interchange project.