

MINUTES
SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION, TECHNOLOGY
AND LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS
HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
November 21, 2013

The Senate Committee on Transportation, Technology and Legislative Affairs and the House Committee on Public Transportation met jointly at 2:00 p.m., Thursday, November 21, 2013, at the Arkansas Convention Center, 5200 Convention Plaza Drive-Ballroom D, in Texarkana, Arkansas.

Committee members in attendance: Senators Bill Sample, Senate Chair; Linda Chesterfield, Jimmy Hickey and Larry Teague; Representatives Jonathan Barnett, House Chair; Charles Armstrong (non-voting), Scott Baltz, Dan M. Douglas, David Fielding, Fonda Hawthorne, Mary P. "Prissy" Hickerson, Mike Holcomb, John Payton and Terry Rice

Other legislators in attendance: Representatives Lane Jean, Stephanie Malone, Mary Slinkard and Brent Talley

Representative Barnett called the meeting to order.

Welcoming Remarks

Senator Hickey and Representative Hickerson thanked committee members for allowing Texarkana to host the meeting. Representative Hickerson recognized Texas State Representative George Lavender, Miller County Judge Larry Burgess, Treasurer Danny Lewis, Texarkana Mayor Wayne Smith, Texarkana Chamber of Commerce Vice Presidents Mark Bledsoe, Chamber Operations, and Charles Nickerson, Economic Development. Representative Hickerson also recognized Representatives Lane Jean and Fonda Hawthorne who provided the topography of their districts and also welcomed members.

Representative Barnett acknowledged Senator Chesterfield, former chair of the Senate Transportation Committee.

Overview of South Arkansas Highway Projects

Mr. Scott Bennett, Director, Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD), was recognized for an overview. He introduced AHTD staff: Frank Vozel, Deputy Director and Chief Engineer; Randy Ort, Information Director; Steve Frisbee, District Engineer; and Jeremy Thomas, Resident Engineer. Mr. Bennett gave a PowerPoint presentation updating the committee on the Interstate Rehabilitation Program (IRP), the Connecting Arkansas Program (CAP) and the status of South Arkansas highway projects. Mr. Bennett reviewed the highway revenue distribution formula and turnback funds to cities and counties. He also reviewed the future of I-49 providing mileage completed, current construction and funding needed to complete remaining mileage. Mr. Bennett informed members of the "IDRIVEARKANSAS.COM" website that provides travel information such as construction zones, live traffic conditions and weather conditions.

Senator Chesterfield requested the names of in-state and out-of-state contractors that AHTD has contracted to do business with for the aforementioned projects, and the number of employees brought on board with them.

Mr. Bennett responded to questions regarding the Bella Vista Bypass and cabling on interstate medians.

Consideration to Approve Minutes of September 10, 2013 [Exhibit C]

Upon motion of Representative Hickerson and a second by Representative Douglas, the minutes were approved.

Presentation on the I-49 Coalition

Mr. Curt Green, President of the I-49 Coalition, gave a PowerPoint presentation on Interstate 49 discussing funding, construction status and connectivity in Arkansas and surrounding states. He stressed the importance of I-49 for transportation and infrastructure due to the amount of trade that will be coming out of the Gulf of Mexico and the economic impact this will have on Arkansas.

Review of the Arkansas State Police's Non-Commercial Driver's License Testing Rules, referred by the Administrative Rules and Regulations Subcommittee of the Arkansas Legislative Council [Exhibit G]

Lt. Cora Gentry, Arkansas State Police (ASP), was recognized and introduced ASP personnel **Monty Pride, Driver License Section; and Major Shawn Garner**. Lt. Gentry reviewed the purpose of the rule, stating it was to allow further study time for an unsuccessful candidate on the knowledge portion of the non-commercial driver's license test. This would increase the pass rate and decrease the expenditure of resources by the ASP for applicants that may re-test every business day. Lt. Gentry further explained that the rule would require a five (5) calendar day waiting period before a re-test in the event a person does not successfully complete the knowledge portion of the test for a Learner's Permit/License or Intermediate Driver's License.

Upon motion by Senator Teague, and without objection, review of the rule was completed. Senator Teague requested that staff remind the committee in 2015 to deal with this issue. Senator Sample advised the Committee will report back to the Administrative Rules and Regulations Subcommittee.

Discussion of the Unpaved Roads Program

Mr. Randy Young, Executive Director, Arkansas Natural Resources Commission; Brandon Ellison, Polk County Judge; and Debbie Moreland, Program Administrator, Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts, were recognized. Mr. Young gave a brief overview of the Arkansas Unpaved Roads Program stating the program vision was to establish a proactive, incentive-based unpaved roads management program that results in the utilization of best management practices on rural, unpaved roads to minimize erosion, stretch county dollars further, and maintain and improve the health of priority lakes and rivers. Mr. Young addressed state interest in this issue and requested the assistance of the General Assembly in making this a state authorized program with sustaining revenues necessary to implement the program.

Judge Ellison, Polk County Judge, shared the pilot project for Polk County Gravel Roads at Boardcamp Creek Watershed, Ouachita Mountain Ecoregion. Judge Ellison advised that this program was modeled after a successful 20 year Pennsylvania dirt and gravel road maintenance program. He reviewed program goals and objectives as a proactive step to address problems involving sedimentation issues that are thought to have direct impact on the environment and to avoid possible litigation.

Ms. Debbie Moreland, Program Administrator, Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts, gave a brief overview of the role conservation districts play in working with county judges to provide information on waterways and endangered species in order to avoid hot spots when doing corrective work. Conservation districts are there to assist counties with federal and state resources to implement programs such as the pilot program to benefit the citizens of Arkansas.

Other Business

Mr. Gene Higginbotham, Arkansas Waterways Commission, briefly reviewed the itinerary for the tour of the Port of Shreveport.

Next Meeting

The next committee meeting will be November 22, 2013, at 7:30 a.m., in the Magnolia Room of the Arkansas Convention Center in Texarkana, Arkansas, followed by a tour of the Port of Caddo-Bossier in Shreveport, Louisiana.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:14 p.m.