

MINUTES
SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION, TECHNOLOGY
AND LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS
HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
November 22, 2013

The Senate Committee on Transportation, Technology and Legislative Affairs and the House Committee on Public Transportation met jointly at 7:30 a.m., Friday, November 22, 2013, at the Arkansas Convention Center, 5200 Convention Plaza Drive-Magnolia Room, in Texarkana, Arkansas

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

Other legislators in attendance: Representatives Stephanie Malone and Mary Slinkard.

Senator Sample called the meeting to order and provided opening remarks.

UPDATE OF ARKANSAS WATERWAYS

Mr. Gene Higginbotham, Executive Director, Arkansas Waterways Commission, presented updates on the status of Arkansas' waterways by discussing challenges due to the new Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) legislation. Mr. Higginbotham addressed concerns with proposed legislation in that the projects that have not received funding within the last five years are subject to being added to the Army Corps of Engineers' list to de-authorize. He stated that the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System (MKARNS) has not received funding since 2007 with the high probability of making the list next May.

Mr. Higginbotham stated that in October the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declared the Neosho Mucket and Rabbitsfoot Mussels as endangered species with both appearing in the Ouachita and White Rivers. There were concerns that the mussel habitat would expand out into the navigation channels causing dredging issues. He discussed recently receiving a letter from the Mississippi River Commission advising if those rivers have not been dredged in five years, and before dredging can take place, there has to be an environmental assessment that could take up to two years.

Mr. Higginbotham informed members that the Arkansas Waterways Commission was providing oversight on Arkansas' portion of the Economic Impact Study currently in progress for the MKARNS. He advised that this study is being conducted in correlation with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation to get a regional perspective.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 a.m. with departure at 8:30 a.m. to tour Port of Caddo-Bossier, Shreveport, Louisiana.

Tour of the Port of Caddo-Bossier and Regional Commerce Center (EOC) in Shreveport, Louisiana

The following members were in attendance for the tour and PowerPoint presentation: Senator Bill Sample; Representatives Charles Armstrong, Jonathan Barnett, Fonda Hawthorne, Mary P. "Prissy" Hickerson, Stephanie Malone, John Payton, Terry Rice, and Mary Slinkard.