

Idaho Transportation Board

Subcommittee on 129,000 Pound Truck Routes

November 19, 2020

The Idaho Transportation Board (ITB) Subcommittee on 129,000 Pound Truck Routes met at 2:15 PM on Thursday, November 19, 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Subcommittee met remotely. In the absence of Subcommittee Chairman Dwight Horsch, Member Jim Thompson presided. ITB Vice Chairman Jim Kempton and Member Julie DeLorenzo participated.

ITB Chairman Bill Moad attended, along with principal Subcommittee staff members and advisors Deputy Attorney General Tim Thomas, Chief Engineer (CE) Blake Rindlisbacher, Freight Program Manager (FPM) Scott Luekenga, Planning Services Manager (PSM) Ken Kanownik, Executive Assistant to the Board (EAB) Sue S. Higgins, and Local Highway Technical Assistance Council (LHTAC) Administrator Jeff Miles.

Minutes: April 16, 2020. Member DeLorenzo made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 16, 2020 meeting. Member Kempton seconded the motion and it passed unopposed.

Case #202004: SH-81 Spur, Milepost (MP) 0.0 to 0.338, District 4. FPM Luekenga presented the Chief Engineer's evaluation of the SH-81 Spur. The Division of Motor Vehicles confirmed that this highway falls under the red route category allowing 115-foot overall vehicle length and a 6.5-foot off-track. The bridge analysis determined that the bridge on the route will safely support vehicle combinations up to 129,000 pounds, assuming the axle configuration conforms to the legal requirements. Although the surface condition is in very poor condition due to cracking, the District has no concerns with designating this route for vehicle combinations up to 129,000 pounds. There are no safety concerns and the Chief Engineer's analysis recommends approving the route.

Acting Chairman Thompson said the route does not appear controversial. FPM Luekenga said a public hearing was held as part of the 30-day public comment period. No comments were received. Member Kempton expanded on the route, which is a short segment connecting I-84 and SH-81. The adjacent highway districts are studying 129,000 pound truck routes, but have no conflicts with this route designation.

Member Kempton made a motion to send case #202004, SH-81 Spur, milepost 0.0 to 0.338, to the Transportation Board with a recommendation for approval. Member DeLorenzo seconded the motion and it passed unopposed.

Gap on US-93, Case #201904, MP 38.0 to 48.3. FPM Luekenga said an earlier applicant requested designating US-93 from MP 41.55 to 48.3 for vehicle combinations up to 129,000 pounds. That inadvertently left a gap on US-93. Staff evaluated that approximate three-mile gap

and had no concerns with designating it for vehicles up to 129,000 pounds. When staff discovered the gap, it contacted the applicant, Idaho Milk Transport. Idaho Milk Transport confirmed that it would like the gap from MP 38 to 41.55 designated as a 129,000 pound route and requested a revision to its application.

Member Kempton made a motion to approve designating US-93, MP 38 to 41.55, as a 129,000 pound route. Member DeLorenzo seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Status of Applications. FPM Luekenga said staff just completed the public comment period for three routes in District 3, SH-19, I-84 Business Loop, and US-20. He would like to present the routes to the Subcommittee soon so the full Board can consider them at the December 17 meeting. He also said there are three routes in District 2 that staff is evaluating, SH-6, SH-8, and SH-9. It is a loop from Potlatch to Moscow. Short line rail service was recently discontinued, so the lumber company needs to transport its product via highway. He anticipates a Subcommittee meeting in early January to consider those routes.

Revisions to 129,000 Pound Truck Route Manual. FPM Luekenga presented revisions to the Manual. The main changes update membership and replace staff members' names with titles. The process is also being changed to have the Executive Assistant to the Board send the respective Board member a copy of the application when it is received by the Department.

Member Kempton recommended presenting the Manual changes to the full Board for consideration because it is similar to a policy.

EAB Higgins said there have been discussions to shorten the timeframe to designate routes. One suggestion was to reduce the public comment period from 30 days to 15. Staff determined the 30-day period was self-imposed. There is no requirement for the 30-day period. The consensus of the Subcommittee was to shorten the public comment period to 15 days.

FPM Luekenga said the timing between a Subcommittee meeting and Board meeting can add additional days to the timeline. One option is to have a standing Subcommittee meeting date, such as the last Thursday of the month. If no meeting is necessary, it would be cancelled.

Regarding the public comment period, Member DeLorenzo said newspapers' deadlines have to be considered, especially weekly publications. That may add time to the process. If the comment period is shortened to 15 days, it will be especially important to provide sufficient notice.

PSM Kanownik added that local officials are contacted as part of the process. Another change staff will implement is to conduct a kick-off meeting when an application is received to establish a timeline and ensure all parties are aware of their responsibilities and due dates.

LHTAC Administrator Miles said the 129,000 pound truck route process was delayed when the FPM position was vacant. He believes since FPM Luekenga has been hired, it has improved. He stressed the importance of communicating with the appropriate local highway jurisdictions.

ITB Chairman Moad also recommended reaching out to the industry more, such as the Trucking Advisory Council, carriers, and shippers.

In summary, FPM Luekenga said the timeline and steps to shorten the time it takes to process an application will be incorporated into the Manual. The Manual will be presented to the Subcommittee for action at the next meeting.

Member DeLorenzo asked if there is a map that shows all of the 129,000 pound routes and if there are gaps in the currently-designated routes. CE Rindlisbacher said there is a map. It is colored-coded by 129,000 pound routes and off-tracking (blue routes allow 95 foot overall vehicle length and 5.5-foot off-track and red routes allow 115 foot overall length and a 6.5-foot off-track). The map doesn't necessarily identify 129,000 pound route gaps.

Member DeLorenzo suggested working with the Trucking Advisory Council to identify the gaps and encourage the Council to work with the industry to submit applications to eliminate those gaps.

CE Rindlisbacher added that the Department has been working on eliminating bottlenecks: identifying sections of road that limit vehicle lengths due to off-tracking issues. District 2 recently discovered that due to improvements made over the years, sections of a highway could be upgraded from blue routes to red routes.

The meeting adjourned at 3:10 PM.

Sue S. Higgins

Respectfully submitted by:
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