

Idaho Transportation Board

Subcommittee on 129,000 Pound Routes

April 22, 2021

Idaho Transportation Board (ITB) Subcommittee on 129,000 Pound Routes Chairman Dwight Horsch called the meeting to order at 1:45 PM on Thursday, April 22, 2021 in Jerome, Idaho. ITB Members Jim Thompson and Janice B. Vassar were present.

ITB Chairman Bill Moad and Member Julie DeLorenzo also attended as observers. Key principal Subcommittee staff members and advisors Acting Lead Deputy Attorney General Tim Thomas, Chief Engineer (CE) Blake Rindlisbacher, Freight Program Manager (FPM) Scott Luekenga, Planning Services Manager Ken Kanownik, Chief Operations Officer Dan McElhinney, Executive Assistant to the Board Sue S. Higgins, and Local Highway Technical Assistance Council (LHTAC) Deputy Administrator Laila Kral were present. District 2 Engineer Doral Hoff participated remotely.

Minutes: March 18, 2021. Member Thompson made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2021 meeting as submitted. Member Vassar seconded the motion and it passed unopposed.

Case #202101: SH-13 – Milepost 24.400 to 26.390; US-12 – Milepost 74.480 to 66.220; and SH-162 – Milepost 23.065 to 8.00 and 38.819 to 31.077, District 2. FPM Luekenga presented the Chief Engineer's evaluation of the above referenced routes. The Division of Motor Vehicles reported that the highways are classified as blue routes, allowing 95-foot overall vehicle length and a 5.5-foot off-track. The bridge analysis determined that the nine bridges on the routes will safely support vehicle combinations up to 129,000 pounds, assuming the axle configuration conforms to the legal requirements. The pavement conditions range from good to poor. There are no safety concerns, and staff recommends approving the application.

Public Information Officer Megan Jahns said 29 comments were received during the public comment period. Sixty-nine percent opposed the reclassification, 14% expressed support, and the remaining comments either asked for more information or did not express an opinion. The main concerns from those opposing the designation related to the poor condition of the highways and pavement damage. The narrow lanes and shoulders and steep grade were notable comments specifically on SH-162.

Member Vassar said LHTAC asked her to delay a decision until the impacted local highway districts can complete their studies on Old Highway 7, which would connect SH-162 to US-95.

CE Rindlisbacher concurred that his intent was to recommend no decision today to allow time for the local public agencies to complete their studies.

Chairman Horsch acknowledged that some believe the state needs to act on requests on the state highway system independent of what local highway jurisdictions do. He believes the trucking industry will abide by the permits and will not travel on non-designated 129,000 pound routes with loads exceeding the permitted weight. He does not object to the Subcommittee making a recommendation to the full Board at this time.

In response to Member Thompson's question on the timeframe for the locals' studies, CE Rindlisbacher does not know. The engineering firm has been hired to conduct the analysis, and he believes that will take one or two months.

Member Vassar moved to hold case #202101: SH-13 – Milepost 24.400 to 26.390; US-12 – Milepost 74.480 to 66.220; and SH-162 – Milepost 23.065 to 8.00 and 38.819 to 31.077, in abeyance until staff determines an appropriate time to move forward.

Member Thompson expressed a desire to proceed on the request; however, he does not want to approve a route that dead ends. He seconded the motion.

The motion passed 2-0 with Members Vassar and Thompson voting in the affirmative. Chairman Horsch said case #202101 will be held until a future date.

Member Vassar clarified her motion that the request will be revisited when staff determines it is appropriate to do so. She does not believe the locals need to complete their studies first if that process is too time consuming.

CE Rindlisbacher recommends taking no action until the local highway jurisdictions complete their process. Both the applicant and District 2 are in communication with the locals.

LHTAC Deputy Administrator Kral estimates the locals will be finished with their study in four to six weeks.

In response to ITB Chairman Moad's question on whether other routes have been approved before the affected local highway jurisdiction(s) acted, FPM Luekenga replied in the affirmative. ITB Chairman Moad questioned the difference with this application and expressed concern with delaying action on this request.

Chairman Horsch asked about the timeline for the current application. CE Rindlisbacher said the application was received on March 8. He concurred that the timeframe is a concern; however, he believes there is sufficient time to allow the local highway jurisdictions to complete their process. He does not want to put pressure on the locals by approving the route at this time.

Chairman Horsch suggested conducting a future meeting remotely to revisit this application. He asked what the process would be if the Subcommittee approved the route today and the highway districts deny their application.

FPM Luekenga responded that the state highways would remain 129,000 pound routes, but commercial motor vehicles hauling weights up to that limit could not legally proceed further unless an alternate route is identified and approved. He added that the Board is responsible for the state highway system.

Member Vassar confirmed that she is fine with the motion that passed.

Member Thompson questioned meeting virtually in the near future and then taking the recommendation to the full Board at its May meeting.

FPM Luekenga said if the local process takes four to six weeks, the Department's timeframe will exceed 100 days. The Subcommittee would need to meet approximately ten days before the May 19 meeting to get this item on that agenda; however, he does not recommend meeting at that time if the local public agencies have not completed their process. He recommends the Subcommittee act today on the application and present its recommendation to the Board in May, reiterating that the Board is responsible for the state highway system.

Based on that information, Member Thompson made a motion to rescind the previous motion and to move forward with a recommendation that the Board approve case #202101. Member Vassar seconded the motion and it passed 2-0 with Members Thompson and Vassar voting in the affirmative.

The meeting adjourned at 2:20 PM.

Sue S. Higgins

Respectfully submitted by:
SUE S. HIGGINS
Executive Assistant & Secretary
Idaho Transportation Board