

Summary of Testimony Related to the Movement of Oversize Loads
For the Senate Joint Resolution No. 26 Study

Prepared for the Revenue and Transportation Interim Committee
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Senate Joint Resolution No. 26 requested a study of the movement of oversize loads and asked the assigned interim committee to identify "impediments in Montana law that preclude or discourage transporting oversize loads" and "options to remove or mitigate the impediments to efficiently and in a cost-effective manner transport oversize and other loads through Montana."

This report briefly summarizes testimony received by the Revenue and Transportation Interim Committee at the October and December meetings. The comments came from Barry "Spook" Stang, Executive Vice President of the Motor Carriers of Montana, Cary Hegreberg, Executive Director of the Montana Contractors' Association, and James McCord with Bay Ltd. Montana. The comments are grouped into two categories: identifying issues and suggestions.

Identifying Issues

Mr. Stang raised the following as possible areas of concern related to the movement of oversize loads:

- There are inconsistencies in how emergency plans are approved and some movers are not asked for an emergency plan.
- Movers may not know who to contact at the local government level to discuss an upcoming move. Mr. Stang suggested maintaining a list of local government contacts to address this concern.
- Movers are not aware that they are required to notify the Department of Transportation (MDT) when utilities will be moved.
- The city of Missoula requires additional permits on state and county roads and the approval process for these permits takes longer than for permits issued by MDT.
- There is no statutory authority for pilot cars to stop traffic and some have been ticketed. There also are no training or safety requirements for pilot car operators.

In addition, Mr. McCord mentioned the following as "weaknesses" related to moving loads from the Billings area to the Port of Sweetgrass:

- absence of a clear hauling corridor;
- inefficient, costly, unique permit hauls; and
- uncertainty of permit issue and hauling timetables.

Suggestions

The following are suggestions for the SJR 26 study that were made in one of the previous committee meetings:

- Mr. Hegreberg suggested that the permitting process could be made easier by giving MDT the authority to identify routes and predetermine configurations that can safely move on those routes. MDT could then offer web-based self-executing permits.

- Mr. Hegreberg also recommended that the Legislature give MDT the authority to establish an oversize corridor and charge a commensurate fee.
- Mr. Hegreberg suggested adjusting the administrative rule (ARM 18.8.1101) that prohibits large oversize loads from delaying traffic by more than 10 minutes. He reasoned that construction delays are often longer than 10 minutes.
- Mr. Stang recommended requiring power companies to build lines at a greater height when reconstructing or constructing new lines.
- Mr. McCord highlighted the Texas permitting system and suggested Montana move in that direction.

Next Steps

The study plan calls for the Committee to finish identifying issues at the May meeting. The Committee should request additional research or presenters at the February meeting so these can be scheduled for May. By July, the Committee should be ready to make any preliminary findings or recommendations and be ready to request draft legislation. This will allow staff to present draft legislation and a draft final report at the September meeting.

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