

**MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND
TRANSPORTATION**

**Seventy-fifth Session
February 10, 2009**

The Senate Committee on Energy, Infrastructure and Transportation was called to order by Chair Michael A. Schneider at 8:02 a.m. on Tuesday, February 10, 2009, in Room 2135 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, Room 4412E, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. [Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Michael A. Schneider, Chair
Senator Maggie Carlton, Vice Chair
Senator John J. Lee
Senator Shirley A. Breeden
Senator Randolph Townsend
Senator Barbara K. Cegavske
Senator Dennis Nolan

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Matt Nichols, Committee Counsel
Scott Young, Committee Policy Analyst
Laura Adler, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Derek W. Morse, P.E., Interim Executive Director, Regional Transportation
Commission of Washoe County
Jacob L. Snow, General Manager, Regional Transportation Commission of
Southern Nevada
Randall H. Walker, Director, Clark County Department of Aviation
Gordon L. Walker, Administrator, Taxicab Authority, Department of Business
and Industry
Susan Martinovich, P.E., Director, Nevada Department of Transportation

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R. Scott Rawlins, P.E., CPM, Deputy Director-Chief Engineer, Nevada
Department of Transportation
Kent L. Cooper, Assistant Director-Engineering, Nevada Department of
Transportation

CHAIR SCHNEIDER:

We will consider changes to our Senate Committee on Energy, Infrastructure and Transportation Committee Rules—75th Legislative Session ([Exhibit C](#)). Former number 9 had to do with the minority report; we are deleting that. In number 10 the wording is revised. I understand the Secretary of the Senate does not do the minority reports.

SENATOR TOWNSEND MOVED TO ADOPT THE REVISED SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE RULES—75TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION.

SENATOR CARLTON SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

* * * * *

CHAIR SCHNEIDER:

We have asked some of the major transportation entities and agencies in the State to give an overview of their organizations to help educate those of us who are new to these issues. They have been asked to discuss projects they are involved in, and also to provide an idea of what impact the budget cuts and federal stimulus package may have on them.

DEREK W. MORSE, P.E. (Interim Executive Director, Regional Transportation
Commission of Washoe County):

I have provided a folder ([Exhibit D](#), original is on file in the Research Library)
containing copies of the basic information in my presentation.

The Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County (RTC) agency budget of \$190 million fluctuates year-to-year because of an intense capital program. This year we have \$65 million for transit operations and capital projects, \$121 million for streets and highways and \$3 million for planning.

The principle sources of revenue for the agency are gas taxes, regional road impact fees, transportation sales taxes, passenger fares and federal capital funds.

Our transit operations are actually conducted by private contractors selected under a competitive bidding process, adding to our agency of 100 staff an additional 250 private sector transit operators and mechanics.

The RTC is recognized as one of the best systems in the country in terms of efficiency and productivity. When looking at tier systems, we are always number one or two in terms of efficiency, cost per passenger, cost per revenue vehicle hour and other transit statistics.

We are now carrying over nine million riders annually. We would have to go to a community of one million or more to see the number of riders we have within a community of 400,000.

SENATOR CEGAVSKE:

Do you have a paratransit program for seniors as we do in the south?

MR. MORSE:

Yes, we do.

SENATOR CEGAVSKE:

Do you also have a program for transporting college students?

MR. MORSE:

We have the Wolf Pass Program offering discounted fares to students that has evolved over the years. There is good ridership by students at the university. Eventually, we would like every student to automatically get a pass when they register, but that program has slowed due to the budget shortfalls.

SENATOR CEGAVSKE:

Are the students paying for it?

MR. MORSE:

It is a subsidized program with the University of Nevada, Reno and the RTC contributing to provide significantly discounted passes to the students.

SENATOR CEGAVSKE:

A while back, there was an attempt to get a similar pass program for high school students because of the bussing issue. Do you do anything with the high schools?

MR. MORSE:

We do have service running approximate to many of the area high schools offering steeply discounted fares the students can use. At this time, one problem is our diminishing resources. We will have to contract the service resulting in some schools having a lower level of service in the future.

SENATOR CEGAVSKE:

Do you have the same criteria as in Clark County for picking up seniors?

MR. MORSE:

The service we offer is for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) eligible people. We do greatly exceed the geographic minimums required by the federal government in terms of coverage for that service. In terms of time, we also provide greater coverage than is required. Additionally, for seniors we subsidize taxi fares with vouchers in conjunction with Washoe County. These are expensive services. On our fixed route transit system, 25 percent of ridership for our ride service is seniors and persons with disabilities. Proportionately, the fixed service carries a lot more people than our current ADA transit service. When we have to cut service, we also impact many seniors and disabled persons.

SENATOR CEGAVSKE:

Do you go through the same criteria we do in the south to determine eligibility? Would a senior actually have to demonstrate the need?

MR. MORSE:

Yes. We go beyond the minimum federal standards. There is a screening process in which they have to demonstrate their functional limitations to qualify to ride the service. This is beneficial because on some trips they can use fixed route transit. Many do this because of the flexibility in schedules, and they receive training on how to ride that service as part of the package for that clientele.

SENATOR CEGAVSKE:

We have had some issues in the south with cost to students. Do you know what your cost is for students?

MR. MORSE:

It is not special service. The school district does not subsidize it. We provide discounted youth fares. Where the service is provided near high schools, it gets heavy use. It is also used by those with after-school activities. We have programs to stimulate youth ridership, because these are the people who will be riding as adults once they get used to the system.

Over the years, we have had discussions about providing a substitute for school bus service, but there are parental concerns about kids riding with adults and other situations. That has been the sensitive point over the years. As the economic stresses become more apparent, we will probably go back to see if there is an appetite to provide that type of service.

SENATOR TOWNSEND:

I do not know whether the indexing taxes will be processed by the Senate Committee on Taxation, but there are concerns regarding Washoe County initiative RTC-5 and its effects on the International Fuel Tax Agreement (IFTA). Are you aware of the concerns based on the way the question was placed on the ballot?

MR. MORSE:

We are aware of the concerns about the IFTA. We did extensive research around the country. There are more than 100 cities and 50 counties in various states that do have local option diesel taxes. We have talked with people in New York, Florida, Oregon, Virginia, Alabama and a few others to understand how their systems work. They have told us that their collection of local option diesel taxes are entirely separate, and have no connection with the IFTA. We talked with the trucking industry; we understand their concerns about the IFTA and the complications it represents, and we can see how it is being done elsewhere. The legislation we had drafted—I have not seen the final version from the Legislative Counsel Bureau—separates these taxes entirely from the IFTA; they would not be involved with the IFTA process.

SENATOR TOWNSEND:

I do not know whether we will process that bill, but three of us sit on the Senate Committee on Taxation. It is in the best interest of Washoe County, its citizens, the RTC, the trucking industry and the construction industry to go through that bill before it is introduced to get all your questions answered and be prepared to deal with that when the hearings start.

CHAIR SCHNEIDER:

Please tell us about the free downtown Reno shuttle, how it works, what it covers and what demographic you are covering.

MR. MORSE:

Over many years, the downtown gaming interests asked us to run shuttles there. Nothing came to fruition until five years ago when we were able to use federal demonstration money to implement a service downtown called the Sierra Spirit. These buses loop from the university campus through the downtown to the Truckee River. They run every ten minutes on a fixed schedule. There are brightly colored signs for the yellow buses. Currently, ridership is free with the operating costs being subsidized by Washoe County, the City of Reno and other downtown interests. The people who ride generally take short trips around downtown. It is convenient for a university student to go downtown for lunch or to where their car is parked, and tourists are able to circulate. It has been highly successful, but the majority of people, when interviewed, tell us if the service were not there, they would walk. It is one of the services our board discussed cutting due to economic circumstances. If that service is left in the plan, we would have to cut elsewhere such as longer trips used by working people and for other purposes. All things being equal, it is desirable to keep that service and expand it, but current resources are tight.

JACOB L. SNOW (General Manager, Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada):

I have provided copies of my PowerPoint presentation for you to follow along. ([Exhibit E](#), original is on file in the Research Library).

SENATOR CEGAVSKE:

With this new system on the vehicles, how is the mileage, and how long can they be kept before being replaced? Is this domestic or foreign technology?

MR. SNOW:

Most of our fleet is new. The gold double-decker buses are what you mostly see on the streets. We also have some gold single-decker hybrid buses that are powered by compressed natural gas. Sixty percent of our fleet is now alternatively fueled. We have been pleased with how well this latest round of buses have performed. The public likes the double-decker buses that provide air-conditioning during our hot summers. In comparison to the previous fleet, the fuel economy is much better. The typical bus will last about 1 million miles. The Federal Transit Administration pressures us if we go more than 12 years with a bus. The ACE Rapid Transit vehicles have a stainless steel frame. These vehicles are assembled in the United Kingdom, but the engine, drive train, hybrid systems and seating, totaling about 80 percent of the bus, are manufactured from components made in the United States. These are 20-year vehicles with that stainless steel frame.

SENATOR LEE:

Is there a way to use some of the stimulus money to build more bus shelter turnouts on heavy traffic streets to keep traffic moving?

MR. SNOW:

We can use the transit portion of the stimulus money for bus turnouts. We must be careful how it is done. We need to make sure the right-of-way has been acquired and the design can be done quickly. Otherwise, we could lose those funds.

SENATOR LEE:

Turnouts could make a big difference in that area. I was interested to hear about the University of Nevada, Reno to downtown bus service. That reminded me of the huge number of taxis at the airport. Is there a way to have a system between the Las Vegas Strip and the airport to continuously move people faster and cut congestion? I know this may overlap with private industry, but we can get too bogged down at the airport, especially at the terminal.

MR. SNOW:

We are fortunate to have two routes to serve the airport; the Maryland Parkway route and the Paradise Road route. We are willing to provide additional service to the airport and have discussed with Mr. Walker using our double-decker buses. The airport expressed concern that it is difficult for people using buses to handle baggage, and it is a long walk from The Strip to the check-in counters

for people with bags. Should the opportunity arise, we would be happy to provide that kind of service.

VICE CHAIR CARLTON:

If you asked the average person what is mass transit, they probably would not describe it as resurfacing roads. Please tell me how you came to the decision to use mass transit money for resurfacing projects?

MR. SNOW:

I am sorry if I gave the impression of using mass transit money to resurface roadways; that was incorrect on my part. There are highway funds coming through the State to us to use for highways. We have transit funds coming directly from the federal government to use for mass transit projects such as the Boulder Highway ACE Rapid Transit System, to finish the intermodal terminal in downtown Las Vegas and for construction of park and ride lots. We will not be taking any mass transit funds to put into roadway projects, whether it is for constructing new roadways or resurfacing.

SENATOR CARLTON:

I apologize. I misunderstood the slide which had mass transit stimulus when you were talking about resurfacing. I tied them all together.

Is the intermodal terminal located in downtown Reno part of the new live-and-work complex being discussed for downtown?

MR. SNOW:

Yes. It is a part of that complex.

SENATOR CARLTON:

Will the RTC be operating that or will it be subcontracted to another company to manage?

MR. SNOW:

It will be exclusively operated by the RTC. We lease the land.

SENATOR CARLTON:

Will there be gaming within the complex?

MR. SNOW:

We have the right to put gaming in the complex. We had it in the downtown transportation center, but it generated little money, and there probably will not be any gaming in the new facility.

SENATOR CARLTON:

Do you know, if there is an agreement, if it would be similar to the airport's, or what direction you might go with that?

MR. SNOW:

It is such a small volume operation that it most likely would be handled by a slot route.

SENATOR CARLTON:

You showed a map that also indicated park and ride places [Exhibit E](#). Are there any park and rides on the east-northeast corner of the map other than the one that appears to be North Las Vegas Boulevard?

MR. SNOW:

On the east part of the map, [Exhibit E](#), there is one at U.S. Highway I-15 and the intersection with the beltway indicated by the grey line, and one along Boulder Highway north of Lake Mead.

SENATOR CARLTON:

I represent the Sunrise Mountain area and do not see any park and ride there.

MR. SNOW:

That is correct. We would work with you on identifying a park and ride lot in that area.

SENATOR CARLTON:

So, the residents of the area can park and ride into the corridor and either transfer or walk to get to their employment?

MR. SNOW:

Correct. Or they can take their bicycle. The rapid transit vehicles have bicycle racks on the vehicle that can accommodate three bicycles.

RANDALL H. WALKER (Director, Clark County Department of Aviation):

The Clark County Department of Aviation owns and operates McCarran International Airport, "North Las Vegas Executive Terminal," "Henderson Executive Terminal," Jean Sports Aviation Facility, and a rural airport in Jean.

I will start the slide presentation with our organization chart ([Exhibit F](#), original is on file in the Research Library).

SENATOR LEE:

How is it going so far in removing the experimental aircraft from the North Las Vegas Airport?

MR. R. WALKER:

Currently, the rules and regulations of the federal government we operate under do not allow local entities, at any level, to control the aircraft or types of aircraft that fly in and out of our airports. Once they are federally approved airports, open to the public, only the federal government can determine what airplanes can operate at those airports.

Our Clark County Board of Commissioners has adopted a resolution asking our Congressional Delegation to support us in changing those rules to allow local governments more control to direct certain types of high-risk aircraft to the most appropriate airport.

In our case, we have the Jean Sports Aviation Facility that is a rural airport just outside the valley on the south side. That would be the most appropriate place for those types of aircraft to operate. It would take a change in federal legislation to give us the authority.

SENATOR LEE:

I want your opinion on Clark County having an airport authority with people from Henderson also sitting on a board rather than just the county commissioners. Would you give me the pros and cons on that?

MR. R. WALKER:

I am a county employee, so my perspective would be the county's. Across the country, there is almost every type of organization running an airport, from county, city, authority or state agency to ports like the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey or the Oakland Port Authority. The creative mind is the

only limit to organizing how an airport operates. In all forms of operation, there are those which perform well and those that could use a lot of improvement.

The biggest question to ask is what issue we are trying to solve in terms of changing the form of government of the airport. This airport authority is operated efficiently. We are well recognized in the industry as being the leader in aviation management and in some of the progressive things we are doing at the airports. I am not sure what would be accomplished by changing the form of government. It depends on the number of options, but one is not necessarily better than the other. It depends on the board that is managing the policies they set and how the airport is operating at the time.

CHAIR SCHNEIDER:

Is there going to be a large parking structure at the new facility to take the burden off the old one? Do you plan to add on to the old structure?

MR. R. WALKER:

One of the six project elements for terminal three is a parking garage, similar to the size of the gold garage of six thousand spaces. Once that is open, there should be sufficient parking between the two terminals to accommodate all the parking requirements, except during the busy holiday season for which we would never build.

CHAIR SCHNEIDER:

Another thing is the number of cabs at the airport. When I went to the McCarran International Airport Sunday night, the cabs were backed up from the pickup point to Paradise Road, sitting idling and slowly creeping forward. Do you have any plans for speeding that up or perhaps bringing in rail transport?

MR. R. WALKER:

If you saw cabs backed up that far, it means there were not many passengers. The cabs tend to wait at the airport when there is nothing else to do. We have queuing space, but it is only so large. When you see long lines of people waiting for cabs, then there are no cabs at the airport. It is an interesting dilemma. The only rail project I know about to possibly come to the airport is the Las Vegas Monorail project. They have worked with us, and we know how they can come to the airport. It is incumbent upon them to get their financial house in order to have the capital to do that. We would welcome a rail project to the airport.

There are some airports that have rail to them, but they are not extremely successful in handling passengers.

One problem with rail and buses at airports is the volume of baggage, particularly in a tourist destination. We are seeing less now that the airlines are charging for bags. The last statistic I saw from the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority showed the average passenger couple would have 3.4 bags, including their carry-on, coming to the airport. To wrestle those bags onto a bus, have them dropped off outside the hotel, then lug them through the hotel, is something most people would not do more than once, given the fares available from the airport to their destination. We have to figure out a way to handle the bags to and from the airport as part of the mass transit system if we want it to be successful.

SENATOR CARLTON:

Is the remote bag pickup working well? Are there three hotels where people can check their bags, and the bags end up at the airport for them?

MR. R. WALKER:

There are currently two hotels, The Venetian and the Luxor, as well as the consolidated rental car facility and the convention center which use that system. The MGM Grand Hotel will be coming online sometime this year. The system is working marginally. We are having a hard time getting as many hotels as we think should participate. We think it is a great customer service option. It also allows the customers to shed their bags before they leave the airport, which then would provide a better opportunity for them to take another mode of transportation, particularly mass transit, to get to the airport. We continue to work with the airlines and hotels to improve the system. We now have about 70 percent of the airlines using this system, but more hotels are needed as participants to provide the volume that allows us to make it a system that can operate profitably for the private operator.

SENATOR CARLTON:

Have you surveyed travelers to find out where it is and is not working?

MR. R. WALKER:

The customers who use it are very satisfied with the system. The problem is only two out of the dozens of hotels in Las Vegas participate in this system.

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SENATOR CARLTON:
Do you charge for this service?

MR. R. WALKER:
Yes. Right now it costs \$20 to use the system.

SENATOR CARLTON:
I can tell you right there, that is it.

MR. R. WALKER:
People who use it are glad to pay the \$20.

CHAIR SCHNEIDER:
When the proposed Ivanpah airport reaches the long-term projection of 30 to 35 million passengers, would you be putting in mostly the junket airplanes?

MR. R. WALKER:
Right now, I cannot tell you what the airline industry is going to look like in 2018, making it hard to predict who would go there. In thinking about this, the most appropriate carriers would be those with long-haul service. International charters tend to be long-haul, but that is a minor part of our business, less than 1 percent. Most of the carriers are principally long-haul carriers coming from the East Coast.

SENATOR LEE:
I am generally satisfied with my airport experiences at McCarran. A problem area is coming out from the baggage pickup area where everybody stops. The policeman puts up that little guard gate and waves dozens of cabs through while the queue fills up. Then the gate is taken down, and pedestrians can walk across. Do you know the area I am talking about?

MR. R. WALKER:
Absolutely.

SENATOR LEE:
Can you tell me if you are trying to solve that stoppage problem, or is it not a problem, and I get distracted by it in progressing to my car?

MR. R. WALKER:

It is a problem. When the airport was first envisioned in the late 1970s, the people who put the plan together were bold, but not bold enough. A lot of airports have what is called a stacked roadway system, where arrivals and departures are on different levels. That roadway system would have solved the problem. Now, the only way to solve that problem is to have terminal three take a lot of that traffic. The airport expansion plan, the McCarran 2000 plan, included a central terminal project which opened in late 1985 and was designed for a maximum capacity of 42 million passengers. We did 44 million last year, which was 7.7 percent down over the previous year. We are handling more passengers than the central terminal was designed to ever handle. It is a conflict we cannot change until a lot of those passengers are moved over to a new terminal with more capacity for that kind of operation.

SENATOR NOLAN:

I have noticed that Southwest Airlines, which we all frequently travel, has moved their primary counters to the end where their check-in area is. Then passengers have to come back up to the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) checkpoint. For the most part, that line looks manageable. I do not know if they have the ultimate staffing or not, especially for the local travelers coming out of the garage. Usually, you can see if the line is backed up, but that is quite a distance to go from the garage to the counter and primary checkpoint, and then back up. Is there any thought about opening additional security lines on the "C" concourse, or is it working fine?

MR. R. WALKER:

Overall it is working well. I used that old checkpoint from my office to come here last night. It is monitored with one lane, and sometimes two lanes are open. There were two lanes open when I used it. The TSA does monitor that to maintain a level of service that is equal throughout the airport. Sometimes, they might get behind when a lot of people show up at the same time, but they do have flexibility. We built significant flexibility into all our lanes to open and close rapidly. It is a matter of the TSA keeping an eye on it and shifting their resources to keep their experience level no matter where passengers are in the airport.

GORDON L. WALKER (Administrator, Taxicab Authority, Department of Business and Industry):

I sent my testimony to you ([Exhibit G](#)), and I am ready to answer any questions you may have.

SENATOR CEGAVSKE:

I know limousine operators in Nevada have a problem with limos coming from California who are not supposed to be here. Do you have similar experiences with rogue taxis, and how are you dealing with it?

MR. G. WALKER:

We call them gypsy cabs. Our problem is they are undetected until we get a tip, and then we send out our investigators. In the year I have been with the Taxicab Authority, Department of Business and Industry, we have impounded several. Our agency works closely with the Nevada Transportation Authority. We have a cooperative agreement for the limo problem in which we carry out joint operations.

SENATOR CEGAVSKE:

Is what the limo operators are experiencing as extreme as with the gypsy cabs?

MR. G. WALKER:

It is not quite as extreme. However, it seems when we turn over one, we turn over a second and a third; it seems to run in spurts.

SENATOR NOLAN:

Could you alert us to some of the bills coming up? I understand and have supported in the past what the Taxicab Authority (TA) does and the law enforcement aspects involved. Could you give us a thumbnail sketch of the bills that would affect your agency?

MR. G. WALKER:

There are three bills coming before you. Senate Bill 99 is the one that would limit our police officer's powers.

[SENATE BILL 99](#): Limits the peace officer powers of taxicab field investigators.
(BDR 23-432)

It is often misunderstood by some in opposition to this bill that it would take away taxicab field investigators' police powers; it does not. It limits them to chapter 706 of the *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS), which is our governing statutes, and chapter 484 of NRS, which are the traffic laws. At some point, I may want to put in a couple of other chapters. The reason is to limit our officers to the statutes required to administer under good governance. Sometimes, the police officers have a tendency to go outside the area for which they are responsible. For example, the park police in Clark County are responsible for policing the parks, and if they have a major incident, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (Metro) comes in. The same is true for the TA now. If there is a robbery, we are in the second seat, and Metro takes the lead. They may ask for our assistance. In some cases, if they are busy, they will ask us to take the lead. The bill limits their police powers to the Nevada Revised Statute chapters we are responsible for, and it also puts them on par with our airport control officers and the Nevada Transportation Authority investigative officers in that they are only peace officers while on duty.

SENATOR NOLAN:

I appreciate you alerting us to that, but I did not want to get into a hearing on the bill right now that we will get to later. To conserve time now, could you give us just the general subject matter of the other two bills?

MR. G. WALKER:

Another bill is one limiting the use of cell phones while drivers have passengers in the car. It would require them to use only hands-free cell phones when they have passengers.

The third bill addresses the problem of our medallions being defaced and altered by drivers. This legislation would make those acts prohibited.

SENATOR CEGAVSKE:

When you stop gypsy cabs, do you impound the vehicles? Are there fines, and is there a money fund for it? I know there is a fund for limos.

MR. G. WALKER:

We do impound the vehicles. The fines are deposited into the TA account. They do not go to the General Fund.

SENATOR CEGAVSKE:

What is the money used for? Is it used for ongoing expenses?

MR. G. WALKER:

It is used for ongoing law enforcement efforts.

CHAIR SCHNEIDER:

Over the years, I have seen limos full of people coming to Las Vegas from the Los Angeles area. It looks like people get together to rent a limo to take them to Las Vegas. Some wait here a few days to take the people back. Are they in violation of any law?

MR. G. WALKER:

I am not all that familiar with the limo laws, but from what I know, I would say it is not a violation to bring someone in; it is if they pick up someone here other than the original passengers.

CHAIR SCHNEIDER:

Regarding the hybrid and propane vehicles, is there a way to offer incentives to the cab companies, possibly with reduced fees, to encourage them to switch?

MR. G. WALKER:

I do not know of a way to do that, particularly on the propane side, since that is already a third of our fleet, and they are doing it on their own. I understand there is a bill on hybrids extending the service time by 24 months. That is a good incentive in and of itself.

SUSAN MARTINOVICH (P.E., Director, Nevada Department of Transportation):

We have a summary handout ([Exhibit H](#)), our annual report ([Exhibit I](#), original is on file in the Research Library), and other facts and figures ([Exhibit J](#), original is on file in the Research Library).

SENATOR CEGAVSKE:

You referred to college students to replace those aging employees. Is it only engineers, or are there other entities for which you could work with the university systems to replenish those who will be retiring?

MS. MARTINOVICH:

That is one of the areas where we have broadened our intern program. We used to hire just engineers, but we also need environmentalists, biologists, water specialists, planners and the big-picture-view type of people. As a result, we are broadening our scope of getting people into the agency, including financial and budget specialists. We are working closely with the University of Nevada, Reno and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas on an intern program of about 40 people we hire every summer for a few months.

SENATOR CEGAVSKE:

Are your construction contracts all within the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) or do you contract out? Who do the people who hold up the signs work for? I often see them when driving to Lake Tahoe or Las Vegas. I also have seen 6 or 7 management personnel standing around watching the road grow; it is frustrating. I would like to know how you do the contracts and provide the employees.

I have had a lot of constituents say the 511 Nevada Travel Info phone number is a good feature. I am enthused about the Safe Route to School Program, because so many kids are not walking to school any more, mostly due to safety issues. I also commend NDOT for using sand on our roads in winter and their snow clearing efforts.

MS. MARTINOVICH:

Any time roads are under construction is good, because it means we are growing. We do a lot of contracting with private firms both in design and construction. The sign people are hired by the contractors who are responsible for getting the flaggers and the people needed to fulfill the contract provisions. However, NDOT does construction administration to ensure the plans are followed and we are getting quality work. The people in the field may be there because something was found that needs to be discussed and worked through. We do have good relations with our contractors.

Regarding the sand, by using paving sensors in the ground and other technologies, we can react to conditions sooner so we are using less sand and salt on the roads, which is environmentally better. We are also creating our own mixtures of brine. Our snowplow drivers take their jobs seriously, and they are proud of what they do.

SENATOR CARLTON:

You had mentioned going from design, bid, and build to design and build. What is the portion of jobs that goes to Nevada contractors versus out-of-state contractors?

MS. MARTINOVICH:

We are already gathering that information for the Assembly Committee on Transportation, and I will also get it to you. Of the 22 jobs we currently have under construction, there is one or two that were awarded to contractors outside of Nevada. The rest are in-State contractors.

SENATOR CARLTON:

You are using "jobs" almost synonymously with "projects."

MS. MARTINOVICH:

Yes, that is right.

SENATOR CEGAVSKE:

When you talked about the stimulus package and what you might receive, were there any matching funds required?

MS. MARTINOVICH:

We are hearing that it is 100 percent federal funds. However, the match is not an issue for Nevada, as typically our match to federal money is 95 percent. That is because of the large amount of federal land in this State. For other states, it is an 80 percent match, and they would have trouble meeting the match to the stimulus money.

CHAIR SCHNEIDER:

Tell me about this new road coming in from Ivanpah that is estimated to put 30 to 35 million people in Ivanpah when it opens up.

MS. MARTINOVICH:

That new road has not yet been defined. Interstate 15 (I-15) has been designated as a corridor of the future. That means under national competition or national allocation, it was decided I-15 was important enough to the nation to be so designated. This means more consideration will be given for funding or exceptions to how we do business. We are working closely in the development of the Ivanpah airport and looking at that corridor for alternatives. Not only is

there an opportunity for additional capacity via the road, but also opportunity for rail through either the Maglev transportation system being proposed or the proposed Desert Express to move people from Southern California into Nevada as well as using I-15 as a corridor for freight and goods movement. We always have to balance the growth in freighting goods, the growth in transporting people and the new airport. Nothing definitive has been identified as yet on how we are going to do that. We are looking at a lot of alternatives to make sure we are ahead of the game.

CHAIR SCHNEIDER:

What was the amount you had ready for the stimulus package?

MS. MARTINOVICH:

Billions. When the original numbers first came out, we were hearing it would take 90 days. We put in an amount that we knew we had ready on strictly State projects of \$250 million. Because of the elapsed time between the initial discussions and now, we have over \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion in projects readied by working with our local partners, other areas and State projects.

CHAIR SCHNEIDER:

I read that Utah had \$4 billion in shovel ready projects. Have you heard that also?

MS. MARTINOVICH:

I have. I am not going to comment because I have good relations with my friends at Utah DOT. My understanding is they just cancelled all of their projects, and are holding off spending their current allocations, so they could use stimulus allocations. I am not canceling any of ours. Again, we have far more needs than we have money, so we will use every penny we get.

CHAIR SCHNEIDER:

Obviously, Utah was planning out further. It is about the same size as Nevada in area with I-15 running through it as we have I-95 running through us. Should we have been planning more in advance? The stimulus package is coming out, and we have a great need, but we have not planned shovel ready projects.

MS. MARTINOVICH:

That is not correct. We have planned and have projects. Utah has put a lot more local money into their projects. We are not behind, we are right in there. Utah is identifying projects differently in that regard.

R. SCOTT RAWLINS, P.E., CPM (Deputy Director-Chief Engineer, Nevada Department of Transportation):

We have been ahead of the game in every major corridor in Nevada. Going through environmental documents and things, we have identified about \$5.5 billion to \$6.5 billion in funding shortfall over the next 7 years in projects ready to go if the funding were available. We are working to get projects ready and continuing the design efforts so when money does come, we are ready to put those projects out to bid.

SENATOR CARLTON:

Driving back to Nevada, I looked at the two sets of highways on either side of the Colorado River. After they closed Hoover Dam to truck traffic, there is no longer as much truck traffic on the Arizona side. The trucks are now going through Laughlin and coming up the Nevada side. With the shift in traffic, I am wondering if anyone is looking at those two highways. We have an opportunity to compare the two highways to see how much of the wear is caused by truck traffic and how much by cars.

KENT L. COOPER (Assistant Director-Engineering, Nevada Department of Transportation):

We did respond to a Legislative Counsel Bureau request around 6 or 8 months ago on the same type of issue. We are looking at both of those highways and evaluating them. We do that to all of our highways every year. We had just completed the new projects on U.S. 95 south through the State to the Nevada State Highway #163 Laughlin turnoff, so the highway was fairly new. The ages of the different highways came into account at the same time. On the Arizona side, they are improving that highway and widening it, and we are coordinating with them. We are not sure you will see the correlation you would if those highways were in place when that split occurred and were the same age in pavement.

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MS. MARTINOVICH:

To expand on that, we are in the process of doing a cost allocation study to look at the impact of trucks to our streets and highways. That study should be done within this week, and we will make that report available to this body.

CHAIR SCHNEIDER:

Are there any public comments? Seeing none, the meeting of the Senate Committee on Energy, Infrastructure and Transportation is adjourned at 10:22 a.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Laura Adler,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Michael A. Schneider, Chair

DATE: _____