

**MINUTES OF THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION**

**Seventy-Seventh Session  
April 19, 2013**

The Senate Committee on Transportation was called to order by Chair Mark A. Manendo at 9:09 a.m. on Friday, April 19, 2013, in Room 2135 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4412 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 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 Mark A. Manendo, Chair  
Senator Kelvin Atkinson, Vice Chair  
Senator Pat Spearman  
Senator Joseph P. Hardy  
Senator Donald G. Gustavson

**GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:**

Assemblyman Randy Kirner, Assembly District No. 26

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Jered McDonald, Policy Analyst  
Darcy Johnson, Counsel  
Melodie Swan-Fisher, Committee Secretary

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Caleb E. Harris, Disabled American Veterans  
Caleb S. Cage, Executive Director, Office of Veterans' Services  
Rhonda Bavaro, Deputy Director, Department of Motor Vehicles  
William I. Baumann, Chair, Nevada Veterans' Services Commission; Chair,  
Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service, Nevada Department of Disabled  
American Veterans  
Charles E. Joseph, P.E., Vice President, Nevada Section, American Society of  
Civil Engineers

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Trent Baldwin, P.E., President, Nevada Section, American Society of Civil Engineers

**Chair Manendo:**

I will open the hearing on Assembly Bill (A.B.) 111.

**ASSEMBLY BILL 111**: Revises provisions related to special license plates for disabled veterans. (BDR 43-530)

**Assemblyman Randy Kirner (Assembly District No. 26):**

I support A.B. 111, which passed unanimously out of the Assembly. Nevada has a license plate for disabled veterans. One must be 100 percent disabled based upon military service to our Nation to qualify for this plate. Many Nevada veterans when traveling out of state, especially to California, have received tickets for parking in handicapped parking spaces. Some of these tickets have been as much as \$1,000. The other states do not recognize these veterans as being disabled and qualified to park in the designated spots. Assembly Bill 111 will not create a new license plate but will place the international symbol of access—the white wheelchair on a blue background—on existing plates for disabled veterans.

**Chair Manendo:**

My father was disabled in the Korean War. I never knew him before he became disabled. As his condition worsened over the years and handicapped parking spots became commonplace, he was able to park in these spots with just his disabled veterans license plate. Perhaps our policy analyst can research why this has changed. Do you know when the existing plate no longer served as proof of eligibility to park in a handicapped spot?

**Assemblyman Kirner:**

This is not a problem in Nevada. It occurs when veterans cross state lines. I do not know the catalyst. Perhaps it is a function of California's desperate financial needs. Over the years, it has become a growing problem. There are veterans who actually carry a copy of the *Nevada Revised Statutes* in their pockets so they can use it in court if needed. This is a hassle.

**Caleb E. Harris (Disabled American Veterans):**

Many of our constituents will benefit from A.B. 111. One in particular had a negative experience in California where he went for medical treatment, as

many Nevada veterans must do. He is severely disabled and has the disabled veterans license plate. Parking at the San Francisco VA facility resulted in a ticket. The ticketing officer told him that only the international symbol of access is recognized in California for eligibility to park in a handicapped spot. Our member fought the ticket and won. In the process, however, he had to expend \$30 for a processing fee and money to mail several certified letters. While he is unable to be here today because he is speaking at an event at the local VA hospital, he wanted me to speak on his behalf. We believe an oversight in the original legislation excluded the international symbol of access. The bill will address this matter, and we urge you to pass it.

**Senator Hardy:**

I understand why the international symbol of access will be used, but why is the bill additionally proposing three or four consecutive numbers be used on the license plate?

**Caleb S. Cage (Executive Director, Office of Veterans' Services):**

Representatives from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) can speak to this more precisely. A license plate must meet certain requirements for law enforcement purposes. With the symbol and the consecutive numbers, each plate has a unique number. This is similar to the current disabled veteran plates that have three or four consecutive numbers.

**Senator Hardy:**

Will we ever run out of numbers? I will ask the DMV about the logistics of the numbering system.

**Mr. Cage:**

The current veteran plates are imprinted with a letter and three digits. My plate is C958. There are far more veteran license plates than disabled veteran plates. We have not run out of numbers for them.

**Senator Hardy:**

C958 does not have consecutive numbers.

**Mr. Cage:**

This is the number on my plate. I assume the next plate issued had the number C959.

**Senator Hardy:**

They are not consecutive numbers on the plate but are given to the next veteran in line.

**Mr. Cage:**

That is what I believe is done. You are right that we would run out of consecutive numbers otherwise.

The interest in such a license plate was brought to our attention several years ago as a priority of the Veteran Legislative Symposium, which meets during even-numbered years when the Legislature is not in session. I can provide more anecdotes, but Mr. Harris expressed the main issue that we hear. We also know this situation occurs in Nevada occasionally.

**Chair Manendo:**

We appreciate the symposia. I attend them. There is always a good mix of people in attendance. We discuss potential legislation like this bill.

**Senator Spearman:**

Will this cost veterans more money? Will it be cost-prohibitive?

**Assemblyman Kirner:**

It will not cost more for veterans. The DMV will send letters to the veterans explaining their option to keep their old plates or choose the new plates. We anticipate no extra cost other than this initial letter. There will be 2,600 plates available.

**Rhonda Bavaro (Deputy Director, Department of Motor Vehicles):**

The DMV is neutral on A.B. 111. We submitted a fiscal note for minimal impact to cover postage to mail approximately 2,600 letters to current plate holders.

**Senator Gustavson:**

Will there be an additional minimal fee if they change plates before their registrations are due?

**Ms. Bavaro:**

There is no charge for this plate.

**Senator Hardy:**

By having this plate, disabled veterans will not need a placard, another special plate or a doctor's statement and will not have to change plates between cars. These new license plates will be honored in all states. When all the other placards and plates are used, the fiscal impact to the State is a wash.

**Ms. Bavaro:**

The plate will have the universal symbol of access on it, so it will serve as a handicapped plate. Some people still prefer to have placards that can be placed in different vehicles. These serve the same purpose.

**Senator Hardy:**

A veteran would still be eligible for a placard. Does the veteran have to go to a doctor to apply for one, or would it be approved in another way?

**Ms. Bavaro:**

People with the required documentation for the disabled veterans plate do not need more documentation from their physicians for a handicapped placard.

**Senator Hardy:**

This will save money for disabled veterans.

**Ms. Bavaro:**

It will save them a step in the process by not having to go to the doctor for paperwork to be completed.

**William I. Baumann (Chair, Nevada Veterans' Services Commission; Chair, Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service, Department of Nevada Disabled American Veterans):**

I support A.B. 111. It has been a long time in coming. Recently one of our veterans was ticketed in Montana. He went to court for the citation where the judge treated his disabled veteran plate as if it were a vanity plate. Having the international symbol of access on the plate is very important to counteract mentalities such as that judge had.

**Chair Manendo:**

I will close the hearing on A.B. 111.

SENATOR SPEARMAN MOVED TO DO PASS A.B. 111.

SENATOR HARDY SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Chair Manendo:**

Now we will have a presentation on the "Nevada Infrastructure Report Card."

**Charles E. Joseph, P.E. (Vice President, Nevada Section, American Society of Civil Engineers):**

I have a presentation ([Exhibit C](#)) titled, "2013 Report Card for America's Infrastructure." It covers Nevada's infrastructure as well.

**Trent Baldwin, P.E. (President, Nevada Section, American Society of Civil Engineers):**

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) was founded in 1852. It is the oldest civil engineering organization in the Country. Worldwide, it has about 141,000 members. In Nevada, we are celebrating our fiftieth anniversary and have about 1,300 members. While membership is growing, it remains less than it was before the recession. A list of current officers of the committee is on page 2 of the [Exhibit C](#).

We conduct several programs to ensure top-notch quality of civil engineers. These are listed on pages 3-4 of [Exhibit C](#). The organization is committed to the education of civil engineering students. To that end, we offer a program of high standards for university faculty and staff involved with these students. Another program offers continuing education for civil engineers to stay abreast of developments in the field. The college outreach program is conducted through 290 student organizations nationwide.

Student chapters at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) are noteworthy. Recently, the UNLV chapter placed in the top three of the regional division of the National Student Steel Bridge Competition. This contest is cosponsored by ASCE and the American Institute of Steel Construction. The team now will go to the national level to compete. We also are proud of the UNR Concrete Canoe Team that is the returning

national champion. The team won 3 years ago and placed nationally in the top five. In 2012, the UNR chapter hosted the ASCE National Concrete Canoe Competition at the Sparks Marina.

Our organization has a legislative agenda promoting civil engineering and infrastructure. Its priorities are sustainable infrastructure funding, transportation, clean drinking water and wastewater, qualifications-based selection for engineering services and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education. The quality of work of engineers in Nevada is high. We recognize the hard work done by our members and the public.

**Mr. Joseph:**

About a month ago, the ASCE published the “2013 Report Card for America’s Infrastructure” containing information about infrastructure in every state. The report is available on the Website or through phone and electronic tablet apps. Our organization began publishing yearly report cards some time ago to grade the various components of the Country’s infrastructure with a familiar A through F rating. The A grade is “Exceptional: Fit for the Future.” The lowest grade is F, meaning “Failing/Critical: Unfit for Purpose.” The definitions of the grades are found on pages 6 and 7 in [Exhibit C](#). Overall, America’s cumulative infrastructure grade is D+. As shown on page 8 of the exhibit, scores in many of the 16 categories were poor. The recession has hurt the ability to maintain, much less upgrade, facilities in the Country and in Nevada. The ASCE estimates that nationally \$3.6 trillion is needed to maintain and modernize all parts of the infrastructure. On page 10 of [Exhibit C](#), an annual \$201 billion funding gap for needed infrastructure investment nationwide is presented. Nevada has a funding shortfall as well, but it is not of this magnitude.

**Mr. Baldwin:**

This information is important because by not investing in our infrastructure, our nation is losing economic benefits. An example on page 11 of [Exhibit C](#) shows that without an investment of \$157 billion per year through 2020, the ASCE estimates an annual household drop in personal disposable income of \$3,100. This includes expenses for such things as wear and tear on our cars due to poor roads and higher health care costs due to poor waste reclamation. The Mayor of New York City has said what makes Manhattan great is its underground infrastructure. What we do not see on the surface helps our Country run. Computer technology, power lines, buildings and roadways are just some of the elements to consider. When infrastructure components are not robust, we do

not have the same opportunities as we otherwise would have. An estimated 3.5 million jobs are lost without investment in the system. This can be an economic gain for our State if we can reverse the trend. Investing in infrastructure means jobs, not just in construction, and jobs mean a better quality of life for people in our communities.

Together we ask, "What can we do to raise the grades?" I am proud of the work done by the Senate Committee on Transportation to improve our State's infrastructure. We need a bold plan, leadership and vision for improvement in the components of the infrastructure. Another need is sustainability in project planning with life cycle cost analyses for all systems in our infrastructure. A third point is to find ways to support the existing infrastructure while building new projects.

Infrastructure is the foundation that connects our communities, businesses and people of Nevada. It drives our economy and improves our quality of life. We need to be competitive with other states by maintaining high quality in our infrastructure.

On page 15 of [Exhibit C](#), the figure of \$2.7 billion appears as needed to maintain and upgrade Nevada's drinking water systems over the next 20 years. The shortfall for this same period is \$2.9 billion for wastewater systems. Substantial investments will be needed in the future. Nevada has 149 dams and levees we consider as "high hazard." Many of them in the rural areas, in particular, have deteriorated since they were built. Forty bridges have been identified as structurally deficient.

**Chair Manendo:**

Do you have an estimate of the cost needed to bring these bridges up to standard?

**Mr. Joseph:**

We do not have a cumulative figure. The Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) may have this information. An example of a structurally deficient bridge is the Virginia Street Bridge over the Truckee River in Reno. It is crumbling. This bridge must be inspected every 6 months. The normal inspection cycle for bridges is every 2 years. To replace the bridge and adjacent ancillary works will cost about \$15 million to \$16 million. By multiplying this figure times 40, you



have an idea of the investment required and the financial impact on Nevada to repair its structurally deficient bridges.

**Chair Manendo:**

We will have our staff research this information and share it with Committee members.

**Mr. Baldwin:**

The ASCE has estimated \$233 as the yearly cost per motorist due to poor roads. This entails expenses such as time lost sitting in traffic and vehicle repairs.

**Chair Manendo:**

Forty-two percent of America's major highways remain congested and cost taxpayers about \$101 billion annually.

**Mr. Joseph:**

I have found recent data for Nevada showing that since the recession, our roadways have been deteriorating despite several major new projects. Those were planned well before the recession. Interstate 580 is an example of such a project. Page 17 of [Exhibit C](#) indicates 51 percent of the State's roads are in poor or mediocre condition. I expect the majority of these are in the mediocre category. They are still usable but are on the verge of deterioration. An asphalt overlay could improve road integrity, but money is needed for this kind of maintenance. In the Las Vegas area, 56 percent of the roadways are in poor or mediocre condition. A much higher percentage—86 percent—of the roads in the Reno/Carson City area are in this category.

Congestion and poor road conditions cost Nevadans money. The total cost per driver in Las Vegas is \$1,464 compared to \$1,698 in Reno/Carson City. These figures include vehicle operating costs, money lost due to congestion and accident costs. While congestion costs understandably are higher in Las Vegas, costs for the other two categories in the chart on page 17 of [Exhibit C](#) are considerably higher in the Reno/Carson City area. The reasons for this, presumably, are different weather conditions and poorer road conditions. Depending on the quality of roadway facilities, safety becomes an issue. At least one-third of fatalities in fatal accidents are caused by substandard roadways with narrow shoulders, no shoulders, too few lanes, inadequate

signage and the like. Many road maintenance projects have suffered during the recession and its aftermath.

The next page in [Exhibit C](#) covers road safety in Nevada. The yearly average number of fatalities is 289, with twice as many fatalities on non-interstate and rural roads per 100 vehicle miles traveled than on interstate and urban roads. Reasons for this include higher speeds, narrow lanes and shoulders, lack of medians, obstacles near the roadway and poor signage. Ideally, rural roads should have two or four lanes with a median. We cannot always afford the ideal. One place where improvements have been made is on State Route 160, Blue Diamond Highway, in southern Nevada. Many fatal and serious accidents used to occur on this roadway. The NDOT widened the highway and improved the medians with positive results.

In urban areas, many of the safety improvements are the reverse of those for rural areas. We need to slow vehicle traffic in urban areas. Wide lanes and higher speed limits in Las Vegas give drivers the impression they can drive 50 or 60 miles per hour where bicyclists, pedestrians and buses must share the road. The Legislature is considering a "Complete Streets" bill that aims to slow urban traffic by narrowing lanes, clearly marking bicycling lanes and dedicating lanes for buses. The goal is fewer accidents. This should result in lower insurance rates as well.

Data on page 19 of the exhibit involve the economic impact of the State's transportation system. We export \$53 billion worth of goods, 78 percent of which is shipped by truck on our roadways. Conversely, we import \$77 billion worth of goods. This State is a destination and a crossroads for freight coming to the United States through the ports of Oakland, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Long Beach. Problems can result when ground-shipping traffic is mixed with residential and tourist traffic. Several years ago, a survey of corporate executives in *Site Selection Magazine* listed transportation infrastructure as the third-highest factor in relocation considerations. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), U.S. Department of Transportation, reports that for each \$1 spent on roadway improvements, \$5.20 is generated in reduced vehicle operating costs, delays, fuel consumption and emissions and in improved safety and traffic flow. Its study also found a \$1 billion investment in highway construction leads to the creation of 27,000 jobs.

The chart on page 20 of [Exhibit C](#) breaks down this statistic for our State. For Phase 1 of the Project Neon in Las Vegas, which will cost the NDOT about \$300 million, about 8,340 jobs can be created. This includes 2,850 in construction jobs, 1,290 in construction-support services and 4,200 other jobs. Examples of other jobs created are in businesses that will use the facilities and any positions not related to actual construction needs. Furthermore, a \$1 million investment is estimated to result in about 28 jobs. This statistic can be used to calculate job creation for other projects of various sizes.

The major transportation agencies in Nevada will have unmet funding needs over the next 20 years or so. As listed on page 21 of [Exhibit C](#), the NDOT reports needing \$2.2 billion currently and \$3.4 billion by 2025. The Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada has about \$4 billion of unfunded projects planned for the next 20 years. Similarly, its counterpart in Washoe County has about \$3 billion in unfunded planned projects for the next 20 years.

The Nevada Chapter of ASCE is an advocate of funding infrastructure improvements. We hope Nevada will not have to go into emergency mode to make these improvements. Our chapter has been watching several of the bills under consideration this Session. They are listed on page 21 of [Exhibit C](#).

**Chair Manendo:**

The crosswalk safety bill is mine, and it is on second reading today in the Senate.

**Mr. Joseph:**

We support the fuel tax bills. Nevada has not increased its fuel tax in 20 years. We are falling far behind in highway funding through our fuel tax system. My organization advocates indexing fuel taxes in Clark County. It has worked well in Washoe County. The Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County is one of the few agencies that has weathered the recession because it benefits from indexed fuel taxes.

**Chair Manendo:**

Fuel tax indexing is not used in Clark County. All the other counties in Nevada have this mechanism. I hope the situation in Clark County will change this Session.

**Mr. Joseph:**

Yes. We appreciate your support of that because we need it in the south. The ASCE supports alternative delivery methods, such as those in the Construction Manager At-Risk bill. Facilities can be built more quickly through this approach. The NDOT already has worked on a number of design-build projects. These highway improvements have been completed in about half the time they normally would require.

**Chair Manendo:**

Senator Atkinson is the sponsor of S.B. 171, the matching grants fund bill. It is in the Senate Committee on Finance at this time.

**SENATE BILL 171**: Provides for a program of matching grants to local governments for the maintenance and repair of public works. (BDR 43-621)

**Senator Spearman:**

Where are the mediocre and substandard bridges? Are they in high-traffic areas?

**Mr. Joseph:**

I cannot identify them offhand. Every 2 years, the NDOT is required by the FHWA to inspect all bridges on public travel ways. They maintain a database with all this information and publish a list of substandard bridges. If they are on a high-volume roadway, the NDOT will try to repair them as quickly as possible. A few years ago, at the Lake Mead interchange on Interstate 15 in southern Nevada, a truck drove through the deck of the bridge causing serious damage. Lanes had to be closed and repairs made immediately. Luckily, that bridge was on the schedule to be removed anyway. I can find the answer to your question and provide the information to you.

**Chair Manendo:**

That would be good. You both have given us valuable data. We might call you back for additional information, especially if our policy analyst cannot find the answers we need.

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**Mr. Joseph:**

The Nevada Chapter of ASCE continues to gather data on the conditions and costs of Nevada's infrastructure. We intend to publish our own "Nevada Report Card on Infrastructure" later this year. You will be receiving this information.

**Chair Manendo:**

Yes. It will be useful information for all members of the Legislature, especially members of the Assembly Committee on Transportation and this Committee.

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**Chair Manendo:**

Having no other business, I adjourn the meeting at 10:04 a.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

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Jennie F. Bear,  
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

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Senator Mark A. Manendo, Chair

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

| <u><b>EXHIBITS</b></u> |                |    |                         |   |
|------------------------|----------------|----|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Bill</b>            | <b>Exhibit</b> |    | <b>Witness / Agency</b> | <b>Description</b>  |
|                        | A              | 1  |                         | Agenda  |
|                        | B              | 3  |                         | Attendance Roster   |
|                        | C              | 21 | Charles E. Joseph       | Presentation, "2013<br>Report Card for America's<br>Infrastructure" |