MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

Eighty-third Session
March 17, 2025

The Senate Committee on Government Affairs was called to order by Chair Edgar Flores at 4:09 p.m. on Monday, March 17, 2025, in Room 2149 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4 of the Nevada Legislature Hearing Rooms, 7120 Amigo Street, 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 Edgar Flores, Chair
Senator James Ohrenschall, Vice Chair
Senator Skip Daly
Senator Lisa Krasner
Senator John Ellison
Senator Lori Rogich

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Senator Dina Neal (Excused)

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Senator Fabian Doñate, Senatorial District No. 10
Senator Rochelle Nguyen, Senatorial District No. 3

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jann Stinnesbeck, Committee Policy Analyst
Heidi Chlarson, Committee Counsel
Spencer Jones, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Kelly McNeil, Executive Director, Nevada League of Cities and Municipalities
Elaine Wiseman, Housing Manager, City of Reno

Mendy Elliott, Southern Nevada Regional Housing Authority; Reno Housing Authority; Nevada Rural Housing Authority
Nic Ciccone, City of Reno
Alex Pike, City of Fernley; Nevada Housing Coalition
Jennifer Berthiaume, Nevada Association of Counties
David Cherry, City of Henderson
Wesley Harper, City of North Las Vegas
Randy Robison, City of Las Vegas
Cedric Crear, Onda Housing Group
Dora Martinez, Nevada Disability Peer Action Coalition
John Carlo
Cyrus Hojjaty
Aaron Brown
Maria Nieto Orta, Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada
Celssie Hardy, Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada
Angela Castro, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada
Ron Williams, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1637
Jackie Spicer, Coalition Coordinator, Nevada Environmental Justice Coalition
Joshua Martinez, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department
Ryan Beaman, Professional Firefighters of Nevada
Derric Culpepper, Security Project Manager, Inter-Con Security
Vinny Spotleson, Sierra Club
Leslie Vega, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
Leonardo Benavides, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
John Jones, Clark County District Attorney's Office
Michael Hillerby, Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County
Kelly Crompton, City of Las Vegas
Henry Lay
Brittany Walker, City Attorney, City of Boulder City
Ashley Cole, Area General Manager, Transdev North America
Al Rojas
Tia Smith, American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada
Rob Schlegel
Garrett Pattiani
Billy Pilesky, Quadz Video Bar
Tony Ramirez, Make the Road Nevada
Ed Uehling
David Parks

Andre Wade, State Director, Silver State Equality
Matthew Wilkie
Erika Castro, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada

CHAIR FLORES:
I would like to open up the hearing on Senate Bill (S.B.) 51.

SENATE BILL 51: Provides for reimbursement of cities and counties for reductions or subsidies of certain fees for affordable housing projects. (BDR 25-438)

KELLY MCNEIL (Executive Director, Nevada League of Cities and Municipalities):
For some background, Washoe County and Clark County, and the incorporated cities within them, are required to include a housing element in their master plans. The housing element must include 6 of 12 measures to address the housing needs of the city or county. One of the six measures is to waive fees for the development of affordable housing. In 2019, the Legislature passed S.B. No. 103 of the 81st Session, which allows local jurisdictions to waive or reduce certain fees for the construction of affordable housing. Because of that legislation, over the last five years, Reno, Henderson and Las Vegas have awarded more than $12 million in fee reductions or waivers for the development of affordable housing. [Approximately] 769 units are built or leasing. A summary of these waived fees can be found in our fact sheet (Exhibit C). The local jurisdictions are transparent through a public process when making these awards, and each award is fully vetted.

While these waiver programs are proving to be a beneficial tool in support of bringing affordable housing to market, additional funding from the State or the federal government has been a valuable tool for local jurisdictions. This legislation could prove to go a long way for Reno, Henderson and Las Vegas as each jurisdiction continues to build housing capacity. This legislation could also provide funding to incentivize other jurisdictions to waive fees without jeopardizing their enterprise funds. Types of fees waived or reduced include impact fees, fees for the issuance of building permits or fees imposed for which an enterprise fund was created. For example, a sewer connection fee. The reductions in fees can make a difference between a go or no-go for projects. We are asking the Legislature to continue their commitment to Nevadans, as housing for all is a top priority.

The intent of the Account for Housing Expansion Through Local Partnerships, or HELP, creates a $20 million fund within the Housing Division of the Department of Business and Industry to reimburse local jurisdictions that have waived fees for affordable housing projects. This allows local jurisdictions to seek reimbursement from the Housing Division for waived or reduced fees pursuant to *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 278.235. The Housing Division, through the regulatory process, will create the policies and procedures that will determine how legislation will be utilized. Section 2 of the bill creates the Account for HELP. Section 2 establishes that reimbursement is contingent upon the approval of the Interim Finance Committee. Section 3 allows for local jurisdictions to apply for up to 100 percent of the total cost of the reduced or waived fees. Section 3 clarifies that fee waivers are only available for affordable housing projects as defined by statute, which is tier one, up to 60 percent of area median income (AMI). Section 3 establishes that for the purpose of reimbursement, local jurisdictions are not eligible until the project receives the certificate of occupancy.

SENATOR DALY:
I have seen in Washoe County at least—I do not follow it as closely in Clark County—where they have done waivers and various things to help accommodate housing. This seems like a shift from some of that risk at the city level to do some of this and trying to create a fund in the State where they can get reimbursed for that. Is there any type of matching funds? The city has to put some in [money], or they have committed this much [money], and I know they can ask for reimbursement up to 100 percent. But is there some type of match where the city has to have buy-in and not just say, "We can give all these waivers all we want; we are going to get reimbursed from the State," potentially, if there is even any money? Should there not be some buy-in, some skin in the game from the local government at this time?

MS. MCNEIL:
I am not sure if there are match requirements. I am happy to look into that and get back to you.

SENATOR DALY:
In the bill it says that they can ask for 100 percent reimbursement. I am just trying to say, I know a lot of times when the federal government said, "Hey, we will give you some of this other money, but you have to put up this much to add to it" or whatever. That is just the premise that we are going off of.

Otherwise, we are not taking any risk. We are going to give all this stuff away; we are going to get the benefit, and the State is going to pay for it to this fund, assuming there is any money.

SENATOR OHRENSCHALL:
I know we are not a fiscal committee, but my question is to S.B. 51, section 5. With the $20 million appropriation sought with the affordable housing projects coming down the line in the next biennium, do you think that is an adequate amount of money, or where did that $20 million come from in terms of the funds for these projects? Is that a goal? And do you think that is adequate for projects that will be up and coming the next biennium if this is approved?

ELAINE WISEMAN (Housing Manager, City of Reno):
I am not sure where that number came from, but I can just speak from the City of Reno's perspective. Since 2021, our first approval, we have waived over $12 million in fees, and that is just in Reno alone. I think $20 million is a great start. Where that number came from, I am not sure.

SENATOR OHRENSCHALL:
The $12 million that Reno has waived in these affordable housing projects, is that something that the city has had to bear on it is own? It has not had any support from the state or from federal funds that some of the cities [brought] to bear?

MS. WISEMAN:
Correct. It is a waiver—but still all of the new construction from the affordable housing and that is what enterprise funds are for—to support all of the infrastructure. If we are not requiring them to pay those fees on those projects because they are affordable housing, at some point, it is just not sustainable for the enterprise fund to continue to take that hit.

SENATOR ELLISON:
On S.B. 51, section 2, subsection 4 it says, "Any money remaining in the Account at the end of a fiscal year does not revert to the State General Fund, and the balance in the account must be carried forward to the next fiscal year." Has anybody talked to the Governor's Office on their budget along with … [unintelligible statement] …

MS. MCNEIL:
We have been in conversation with the Governor's Office for the last couple of years. As to the specifics, I am not sure what the outcome is going to be. But I am happy to look into that and get back to you.

CHAIR FLORES:
I understand that we are using enabling language with the Interim Finance Committee. For purposes of just transparency and accountability, is there a reporting mechanism in a scenario where—I assume that should the money be allocated, that should you have folk coming in, they are putting money into the pot. But is there a mandatory reporting requirement, or we are just saying, "Let the Interim Finance Committee, should they want the transparency, make the appointment of six [members of the Committee to review]?" I think that is what you indicated in here. But I am just curious to know, is there a mandatory obligation for you to do any type of reporting, or you are saying "If the money is there, if we get the gifts, then at that point, they will likely go in there anyway?" I am assuming that is the rationale. Could you just walk me through that?

MS. MCNEIL:
That has been the mentality behind it thus far. If we are to move forward with this, the likelihood of moving forward with reporting would be assumed as well. We have not had specific conversations about the reporting component just yet.

MENDY ELLIOTT (Southern Nevada Regional Housing Authority; Reno Housing Authority; Nevada Rural Housing Authority):
All three authorities have submitted letters of support (Exhibit D and Exhibit E). On behalf of all Nevadans, the more tools in the toolbox that we can identify to support affordable housing in the State we are absolutely on board with. Furthermore, we would suggest that through the regulatory process, we would hope that the Legislature would adopt a similar methodology as used in distributing federal competitive, low-income housing tax credits among Clark County, Washoe County and the balance of the State, and prioritization of public housing authorities which are regulated under NRS 315. It is specifically created by the government entities of Nevada to address the need for affordable housing within the geographic region. We also appreciate your question regarding transparency and reporting requirements. Through the regulatory process, we think it would be important that a reporting element would be something that we would entertain as part of an amendment to this bill.

NIC CICCONE (City of Reno):
As the others have mentioned, this has been a valuable tool for the City of Reno. We have waived $12 million in fees for about 2,100 units. When we are talking about the buy-in from the local government, this is waived at the front end. In our view, we believe that this would be a process where the local government initially buys in and helps out that developer. Then, hopefully, we would be able to come to the State and ask for that HELP to reimburse us on the back end after we have waived the fee. This has been an incredibly valuable tool. It is just one tool in our toolbox to make housing a little bit more affordable in Reno and across the State. We also believe that it will encourage other local jurisdictions to waive more fees, specifically enterprise fees. Those funds are meant to pay for the service that those individuals are paying for, specifically the sewer connection fees. It is our belief that finding another pot of money-and we did look at federal money. Unfortunately, we were not awarded a grant for that at the time, but we have looked at other options. We have started to get creative, and this was one solution that we thought might be viable.

ALEX PIKE (City of Fernley; Nevada Housing Coalition):
We are in support of S.B. 51. This bill is important for supporting the policy priority of affordable housing projects in Fernley. The degree to which the City may be eligible for reimbursement of certain expenses related to affordable housing projects will greatly improve the opportunities that Fernley will have to promote more affordable housing. We urge you to support this bill.

JENNIFER BERTHIAUME (Nevada Association of Counties):
Creation of the Account for Housing Expansion Through Local Partnerships is a step forward in addressing the affordable housing challenges our communities face. This dedicated funding stream empowers local governments to reduce or subsidize impact fees, building permit fees and other costs that can hinder the development of affordable housing projects. For these reasons we support S.B. 51.

DAVID CHERRY (City of Henderson):
The City shares a commitment to increasing the availability of affordable housing in our community and others around the Silver State. We thank the Nevada League of Cities for bringing this legislation and support the creation of a new funding source that local governments can tap to help further the ability to invest in partnerships with the development community to incentivize construction of affordable housing units. This month, construction is slated to

begin on new affordable housing units being built in partnership with Nevada HAND in Henderson. The City has provided approximately $150,000 in incentives to this project which will provide 144 new units for qualified individuals. More affordable development is planned in the next few years with the City, providing incentives to encourage these needed additions. Senate Bill 51 would allow the City to recover a portion of these incentives so they may be reinvested in future affordable housing projects, creating a win-win for all involved. For those reasons, we urge your support for S.B. 51.

WESLEY HARPER (City of North Las Vegas):
We echo the broad sentiments of our sister municipalities and interested stakeholders. This would be one more tool that the City could use in order to increase affordable housing within our City and make more housing available for our residents. For that reason, we support S.B. 51.

RANDY ROBISON (City of Las Vegas):
We support affordable housing. We support this bill.

CEDRIC CREAR (Onda Housing Group):
We are an affordable housing developer that has properties under development in Florida, looking to come into Nevada to help with the need to bring more affordable housing into our community. We are in full support of S.B. 51. I can tell you firsthand that a lack of a program of fee reimbursements can be a huge impediment for developers to come in and try to make a project pencil. We know we need more housing. We know that we have to help [developers] to get there; hopefully, S.B. 51 will do just that. We are here to support. Hopefully, we can get some more affordable housing into all of our communities so that people can have a great and safe place to live.

DORA MARTINEZ (Nevada Disability Peer Action Coalition):
We wholeheartedly support this bill. Please have accessible transportation nearby.

JOHN CARLO:
I am a familiar voice in Nevada. Basically, well, as I read this bill, I do have major problems with bills coming from tax money from Nevadans. When illegals are being hired and being paid from Nevada [tax] money, it is not really hard to figure out when you go on these big projects. I have been on these projects all over Nevada, and you have illegals building this stuff. There is no provision to

prevent that on prevailing wage jobs and other projects. I would like to see this Legislature actually put something in a bill that prevents illegals from receiving this money. I do not think our money should be going to a bunch of illegals building these houses. For one thing, they do not care about this country, and they do not build with the same quality as an American does. It is not the same. I do not support this bill. You guys talk about affordable housing all the time, but very little gets done. We all know what really needs to happen with the expansion of land in Clark County, the land use. The obvious is there; we just keep talking about it and talking about it, and nothing ever happens. We know that a bunch of illegals are working in Nevada, and we just do not want that.

CYRUS HOJJATY:
I will support this bill. Thank you so much for preparing this, and keep fighting. Although, make no mistake, this does not solve the heart of our problems. It does help, but I will discuss the heart of our problems in public comment.

SENATOR OHRENSCHALL:
Are other states reimbursing municipalities for these fees? Is this common in other states? I just wondered if you know; if not, maybe that is something that we could research.

MS. MCNEIL:
I am happy to look into that and get back to you. I do not know at this time.

CHAIR FLORES:
Please share that with the entire committee so that everybody has access to that. If anybody else who worked [on the bill]—I know there is a collaborative effort that was done on this particular language. If any of you have that data, please do share it.

MS. MCNEIL:
We are open to an amendment to include the reporting components as well.

CHAIR FLORES:
I have four opposition letters (Exhibit F, Exhibit G, Exhibit H and Exhibit I) to S.B. 51. With that, we will go ahead and close out the hearing on S.B. 51. Next, I open the hearing on S.B. 290.

SENATE BILL 290: Revises provisions relating to regional transportation commissions. (BDR 22-743)

SENATOR ROCHELLE NGUYEN (Senatorial District No. 3):
Senate Bill 290 aims to amend NRS 277A to grant regional transportation commission (RTC) security officers the authority to remove individuals from RTC vehicles or other property if they engage in disruptive or unlawful behavior as defined by existing law. This legislation seeks to enhance RTC's ability to maintain a safe and efficient public transfer transit system by explicitly empowering RTC security officers to address unlawful conduct by removing offenders from transit vehicles. Public transit must continue to be a safe and reliable option for all who depend on it, whether they are commuting to work, attending school or accessing essential services. What really struck me about the work that went in—and I have to give a lot of credit to Angela Castro who is really the mastermind behind getting all these groups together. I am really proud to sit here with the three copresenters. The work that they have done coming from their various experiences is the work that they put in during the interim—they brought in stakeholders really early on, with everyone from labor to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to our law enforcement partners, prosecutors and community advocates—to come up with a piece of legislation that we are able to present here today.

AARON BROWN:
I give the following testimony (Exhibit J).

MARIA NIETO ORTA (Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada):
As you are all aware, RTC has many responsibilities, and one of our primary functions is to serve as southern Nevada's transit provider. The Regional Transportation Commission's transit system connects tens of thousands of residents in our community to jobs, school, medical appointments and more. It also transports millions of visitors up and down the Las Vegas Strip. In 2024, the RTC transit system served over 52 million passengers and 1.2 million transit riders. As a regional transportation provider, ensuring the safety of our riders and operators is not just a goal, it is our mission. As public safety concerns have increased in recent years, RTC has engaged with riders, drivers, security officers and our community to develop a comprehensive, multipronged approach to make transit safer in southern Nevada. This ongoing approach to safety includes a focus on continuous security, data analysis, investment in security

personnel and technology, strategic bus stop placement and lighting, education campaigns and partnerships.

As you can see on my presentation (Exhibit K contains copyrighted material. Original is available upon request from the Research Library.), over the last decade, RTC has invested over $33 million in security services and safety upgrades throughout the transit system, including an investment in armed security officers, panic buttons and barriers for our operators. Last fiscal year, we experienced a 5 percent increase in ridership. During the same period, incidents decreased by 38 percent. While the number of incidents has decreased, even one incident is one too many. We remain committed to evaluating our programs, processes and investments, and we will continue working with our transit community to ensure safety every day. As discussed, RTC is constantly looking to improve transit security based on input from our transit riders, bus operators and key community stakeholders. Over the last summer, RTC formed a transit security discussion group that included representatives from the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, Clark County District Attorney's Office, ACLU, the Culinary Union, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada, and various community organizations and transit riders to discuss improving transit security. One of the recommendations that came from the group in order to improve the safety and efficiency of the transit system was a legislative proposal to modify NRS language to authorize RTC security officers to remove passengers when necessary. The ATU and Transdev [North America] have agreed to partner with us on this important legislation. Inter-Con security, our security contractor, is fully supportive and committed to assisting with that.

CELSSIE HARDY (Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada):
As Senator Nguyen stated, S.B. 290 amends NRS 277A to grant RTC security officers the authority to remove individuals from RTC transit vehicles or other property when they engage in disruptive or unlawful behavior as defined under existing law. This bill clarifies RTC's authority to act in situations where immediate intervention is necessary for the safety of passengers and operators. Currently, RTC security does not have explicit statutory authority to remove disruptive individuals from transit vehicles. Instead, when an incident occurs, the transit operator must stop the vehicle and contact a dispatcher in the bus operations center. That dispatcher then contacts our security team and the appropriate law enforcement agency. Depending on the severity of the incident, law enforcement may issue a citation or make an arrest. But in the meantime,

bus service is delayed, and public resources are stretched. Nevada's trespassing laws apply to real property, not personal property like vehicles. As a result, RTC cannot classify disruptive behavior on buses as trespassing, and to be clear, this bill does not amend the trespassing statute. We are not seeking the ability to trespass individuals from transit vehicles. Instead, S.B. 290 seeks to align RTC's authority with NRS 203.100, which already defines unlawful acts on public transportation and includes causing disturbances, endangering passengers and interfering with bus operations. By referencing NRS 203.100, this bill clarifies that RTC security officers can remove individuals engaged in unlawful behavior, ensuring that transit vehicles remain safe and operational.

SENATOR ELLISON:
It sounds like this is two parts. Number one is that RTC can remove any cars within a loading/unloading zone. Correct? The second is—the problem is people that get vulgar or whatever on the bus, they can be removed by police or RTC. Is that correct? That is all the bill does.

SENATOR NGUYEN:
What happens right now is RTC security officers, if you are at a transit center like a building and there is someone causing a disturbance, they can remove that person from the center. This [bill] kind of puts this in alignment. So right now, let us say you have a school bus full of kids that maybe are going to school or you have people trying to get to work and someone gets on the bus and causes a disturbance. They have to pull that bus over. The safety of all the people on the bus is at risk. Now they are all delayed in getting to either school or work or doctor's appointments or wherever they are trying to go on public transportation. It puts a lot of pressure because [the person causing the disturbance] cannot just be simply removed from that bus. They have to wait until a law enforcement partner comes and removes that person physically from the bus, which puts another strain on our law enforcement to be able to come and respond to things.

This working group determined what [RTC security officers] needed to do was to get those buses back on the road in a safe way. This [bill] allows those RTC security officers to come and de-escalate the situation in the best possible way and get that bus moving, get those kids back to school, get those people back to work, or get people to their doctor's appointments in a timely manner. Sometimes, people are waiting on those buses to have a disruptive person [removed] for hours because it tends to be like lower on the priority list, which

is understandable. What this bill does is it allows [RTC security officers] to remove people that are being disruptive. It does not create a new law; it does not give RTC security officers the ability to trespass people out of the bus. But it does allow us to de-escalate the situation, protect our bus drivers and protect all the people that are on those buses, including schoolchildren and people trying to get to work.

SENATOR ELLISON:
I was kind of shocked, when I talked to your colleagues here, that that was not being done. I am glad they are addressing this. It seems to be more and more important every day.

SENATOR ROGICH:
I just wanted to ask you if you could please explain what occurs once the person is removed. I know we discussed it, but I think for the panel it would help them understand what occurs thereafter.

MS. HARDY:
So, the procedure currently is the bus pulls over, law enforcement is contacted, law enforcement arrives, they remove the passenger from the bus, and then law enforcement under their existing authority can then issue a citation or arrest the passenger if necessary. It is a case-by-case situation. The incident does not always rise to that level. [Law enforcement] can also just let them go so that the bus can continue on its route. But that is what currently happens once law enforcement is on the scene and removes the passenger.

SENATOR ROGICH:
But now with the authorization of the security officer removing the disruptive person, what happens at that point?

MS. HARDY:
This bill would authorize the transit security officer to de-escalate the situation, remove the passenger without the need of law enforcement intervention, and then the passenger would be free to go. Regional Transit Commission security does not have arrest authority. And again, we are not seeking to trespass the individual from the bus. There is no sort of permanent ban. It is just to de-escalate, remove, and then get the bus back on its route.

SENATOR DALY:
I know we are trying to get the people off the bus. So how is it actually going to work? If you are at a transit station, you have security there all the time. I am sure you do not have the ability to put a security officer on every bus. Do you think they are going to be able to respond much quicker than Metro [Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department] or the local police? They are going to be able to respond quicker because you are going to have dedicated people for that to try to address these issues?

MS. NIETO ORTA:
You are correct. We do not have security officers in every bus. However, there has been strategic planning to ensure that we have rovers going around in their own security vehicles. They are everywhere throughout the [Las Vegas] Valley, and there is at least one for each quadrant. Since the attainment of our Inter-Con contract, the amount of rovers was doubled from 7 to 14, and the quadrants have shrunk.

SENATOR DALY:
Understood. But if he is on a bus going one direction and another bus is going the opposite direction, you are going to have a team that would come out and respond to that. So you are still going to have the same incident with maybe just a shorter time. You are still going to stop [the bus], pull over, wait for your security person to come. You may or may not call law enforcement just based on what it was, but your immediate need is just to get them off the bus. Are you going to have a team that is going to come out and do that every so often that they can call?

SENATOR NGUYEN:
I think part of the existing procedure is if there is a disruption, they do call down to the security team already, and then the security team makes that additional call to have law enforcement come and de-escalate that. I think what they found is when you have someone obviously who maybe has a weapon or is [causing] a heightened [situation], then we will have more resources from our law enforcement partners that can address those things in a quicker time period. I think a lot of times you have buses that are taken off the roads when you just have someone who maybe is cursing a lot and maybe just needs to be de-escalated. Talking with all these partners, we were able to look at the different perspectives to figure out what we could do to de-escalate situations in a quicker fashion. So yes, while there are 14 people that are roaming around in

security vehicles, it may just need one person in there saying, "Hey, I am just going to take you off the bus, I am not going to arrest you. I am not going to do anything. I am just getting you off the bus so we can get this bus moving." It will move things faster, and I think it potentially will lead to de-escalation sooner. Because when you call the police right now [for] something that maybe you could have just talked someone off the bus—and said, "I am not going to arrest you. I am not going to trespass you. We just need to calm down; we need you off the bus."—Now that has escalated into a situation where Metro arrives and has to make a full arrest to get the person off the bus. This will keep our bus drivers safer and our riders safer.

SENATOR DALY:
I do not disagree. I was just trying to understand and get procedurally how you are going to do this. It will be quicker, and nothing against the law enforcement; they got a tough job and a lot of stuff to do. Unless they are right there, they get somebody else dispatching what their priorities are as well. What type of security people do you hire? What training do they have? They could not arrest anyway I don't think. Are they armed? Are they not armed? What type of people are we talking about? Are these dedicated staff, or are they rented security officers?

MS. NIETO ORTA:
Our security officers are contracted through Inter-Con security. We have 330 security officers with that contract last year. When we transitioned to Inter-Con, all security officers completed 80 hours of training in a classroom setting and 40 hours of on-the-job training which included 8 hours of use of force and de-escalation classroom training.

SENATOR DALY:
Do you have a provider that does the training? So, they are not actually RTC staff?

MS. NIETO ORTA:
Yes, that is correct.

SENATOR OHRENSCHALL:
If the bill passes and if a bus rider is removed for engaging in any of the activities at NRS 203.100 offenses in the public conveyance, there would not be any prohibition for them going to the next bus stop and getting on the next

bus on that route? They would not be prohibited if, let us say, they have calmed down and the incident is over, so they can continue their route to get home or to work. Is that correct?

MS. HARDY:
Yes, that is correct.

CHAIR FLORES:
Just one quick point of clarification for me. What is the process? Now, if a minor wants to utilize RTC, what is the process now?

SENATOR NGUYEN:
Are you talking about the RTC Ride On[-Demand] Program?

CHAIR FLORES:
Yes.

MS. NIETO ORTA:
We will make sure to get you the exact process for that.

CHAIR FLORES:
The only reason I am asking on that particular program is, I am thinking of a hypothetical where there is a minor involved and we are going to have the minor get off [the bus]. I would like to know that there is a trigger for some type of parental notification so an adult knows this child has been removed from this [bus] and they are at this location. I am assuming the security guard would likely stay with them at that point and then wait either for another bus or for the parents to be notified and have somebody arrange transportation, correct?

ANGELA CASTRO (Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada):
Our Ride On program, and all of our programs right now, most of them involve high school students. However, we know that a lot of middle school students do ride our buses. Our bus system is known as a safe place. So, our bus operators have definitely worked very hand in hand and have been trained in terms of it being a safe place. From a security perspective, when we have—and I will say we on the record, we have had some challenges. The good news is our [bus] passes are not anonymous. We do not know specifically who has what pass, but it is on the app. So, we know how many students are riding and

where the students are riding from. If we drill down even further, we also have live cameras on our buses. We can identify in real time to ensure that the student rode the bus. We have done that too. You are correct. We have multiple different measures in place. We work very closely with the Clark County School District for high school students and our middle school students, and both the officers and the operators are trained.

CHAIR FLORES:
That would be my only request if we could potentially just flesh that out in an instance where we are going to kick off a minor that we are not just going to leave them on the side. I know we would not do that. That is common sense. It would be too much of a liability in so many different directions. But if we could just potentially consider cleanup language saying there is going to be at the time of registration with the app—maybe it is already a requirement—that someone over the age of 18 be put as a point of contact. Where there is just an automatic trigger that we are removing the minor and that they will be notified. If that is not a requirement, then that we have some type of trigger with the officer involved or the employee who is going to remove the minor where they could then proceed in contacting the appropriate person.

MS. CASTRO:
Duly noted, and we will be sure to include that in the policies and procedures. We have policies and procedures manuals, and we will definitely add that if it is not already [there]. I just need to go back and review that.

RON WILLIAMS (Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1637):
I am a transit operator for Las Vegas, Nevada. Right now, when passengers get on that bus and they bully us, they know security can't do nothing. We just want something—that is why we are supporting this bill—so that now that the word gets out there, that security can put you off [the bus] now. Because I have been in situations where they get on the bus, and a passenger told me you have a better chance of getting me off than he does. That's what we are going through. Not only I am a driver for 18 years, I am also representative of the union. I am the executive board member for ATU 1637, and we are supporting S.B. 290 because the trials that we go through as bus drivers is real serious, and it is getting worse. We need some type of deterrent. We know this is going to work. I have faith in these new security guards. I would say [about] the ones we had before, I did not. But RTC did a tremendous job in training these new guys. They are sharp and they are ready. When we are on the bus with them,

they feel sorry for us because they can't do nothing. They are basically monitors. So that comes in conflict with drivers. Now, we do not want them on our bus because they can't do nothing anyway. This is why we are supporting S.B. 290.

JACKIE SPICER (Coalition Coordinator, Nevada Environmental Justice Coalition):
We are a statewide coalition of community organizations that are fighting for sustainability, justice and equity in all levels of government decision-making. We believe that S.B. 290 will bring us one step closer to the future that we hope to see by offering a solution to make public transit more secure for the transit riders who depend on this bus system to get to work, school, doctor's appointments and other essential services. This is a priority for the Environmental Justice Coalition because expanding access to public transit can help reduce emissions from personal vehicle use and mitigate the worsening impacts of deadly heat, drought and poor air quality. Safe and dependable public transportation is crucial for the sustainable, long-term growth of our communities. Last year, our coalition hosted 19 in-person, community-listening sessions across the State with over 200 participants. We partnered with the Greenspun College [of Public Affairs'] Public Communication Initiative at University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), to survey over 1,000 residents statewide. These initiatives focused on understanding the lived experiences of frontline community members who are facing extreme environmental and socioeconomic challenges. We learned that safety is a top concern for transit riders in both the community-listening sessions and the digital survey results. Multiple residents said they did not feel safe either at night or as a woman, implying that women and gender-nonconforming people are subjected specifically to gender-based violence and harassment on public transportation. This must change for us to achieve a future where all Nevadans can access safe, reliable and affordable public transportation options. We encourage the committee to vote yes on this important legislation.

JOSHUA MARTINEZ (Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department):
We are here in support of S.B. 290. This is a long-overdue tool for RTC security to protect the bus riders as well as their drivers. This will give them the ability, as you heard earlier, to take action and remove unruly individuals. They have been trained in de-escalation techniques. A lot of the response from Metro is exactly as you heard from the previous testimonies where they will have an encounter with an individual, pull over the bus and then summon us. In some cases, they are simple, where we de-escalate the situation; sometimes, they are

a little bit more advanced where we have to use different tools to de-escalate. One event that I had to respond to with a captain of the use-of-force team that we oversee had an unruly passenger on a bus that was using types of rocks and stuff. So the driver pulled over and got off the bus so they could be at a safe distance, and our officers had to go in there to de-escalate the situation. We had to use the canine, and then the subject bit our officer's ear off. Those are just the kind of the extreme circumstances that take place sometimes, not all the time. Most of the time, they are the typical removals that you will see.

RYAN BEAMAN (Professional Firefighters of Nevada):
As a firefighter serving our community for the last 29 years, also as a paramedic with a strong commitment to public safety, I am here today to express my support for this important legislation which proposes revisions to the security operation of RTC. As a firefighter, I witnessed firsthand the importance of maintaining safe environments for the public, particularly shared spaces such as the transportation hubs. These areas play a vital role in connecting our community, ensuring that the security is critical to the well-being of all citizens. Senate Bill 290 empowers designated security personnel to address this disruptive, unlawful behavior effectively, enhancing the safety of passengers, workers and first responders alike. It was already mentioned a little bit earlier that the majority of the time these calls come in, they go through the 911 system; 911 activates law enforcement and fire, and we are usually responding the majority of the time to these types of calls. When we arrive, there is a security guard sometimes there standing outside of the bus [who] is not able to remove the patient or the person from the bus. A lot of the times as fire, we are able to remove that person from the bus. With this piece of important legislation, it will actually help with us not having to respond to these calls and keeping us available for other type of services that the community actually needs. I urge your committee to pass S.B. 290 as it takes a significant step toward reinforcing safety for the public.

DERRIC CULPEPPER (Security Project Manager, Inter-Con Security):
As someone who works daily to ensure the safety of our public transit system, I have seen firsthand the challenges that we face when we are dealing with disruptive and unlawful behavior. Our security teams are committed to protecting passengers, operators and the broader community every day. Our security teams respond to incidents that disrupt transit operations, some of which put passengers and employees at risk. Right now, when an issue arises, the transit operator has to stop the vehicle, contact the dispatcher and wait for

law enforcement to arrive. This creates a risk of service delays and increases the potential for the situation to escalate while we are waiting on that law enforcement response. I understand that one of the S.B. 290 goals is to mitigate this risk by allowing trained RTC security officers to take immediate action to help ensure the safety is restored quickly and efficiently. Since Inter-Con took over transit security operations at RTC, we have witnessed a 38 percent drop in security-related incidents, even as ridership has gone up by 5 percent. I firmly believe that this is due to our strong security presence and our ability to de-escalate these situations before they evolve into larger problems. Giving RTC security officers the ability to handle certain safety issues themselves without delay can allow us to build on this success and continue making transit safer and more efficient for all riders. At the end of the day, my goal and the goal of the entire Inter-Con team is to improve safety. Our security team is on the ground every day, ensuring that people can get to where they need to go without fear or disruption. Having the tools and authority to act quickly, de-escalate these issues effectively and better protect the people who rely on public transit every day is critical to our ability to achieve this goal. I understand the objective of S.B. 290 is to create a safer public transit system and ensure the better protection of passengers, operators and employees alike. These are objectives that I strongly support.

SENATOR OHRENSCHALL:
It sounds like Inter-Con is going a long way to try to make bus riding safer. What is the protocol now if, let us say, a juvenile is considered unruly and needs to be asked to leave the bus because they are doing something in violation of one of the statutes? Are they asked to leave? Is a parent called?

MR. CULPEPPER:
Presently, we follow the rules and regulations set forth by RTC in accordance with our contract. We follow the standard operating procedure that they set forth.

SENATOR OHRENSCHALL:
Could you provide us a little more information about what that entails? Is a parent or guardian called, is the child given another bus pass so they can try to get home? Do you have any information about that, Mr. Culpepper?

MR. CULPEPPER:
Presently, we follow the standard operating procedure set forth by RTC. We do make every effort in order to contact the minor's parents.

SENATOR OHRENSCHALL:
Ms. Castro, do you have any more information you can provide?

MS. CASTRO:
Yes. According to policies and procedures, if there is a high school student, for example, who could be disruptive, et cetera, we do take them off the bus, and we will try to contact either the school or the parent. That is in our policies and procedures.

SENATOR OHRENSCHALL:
A lot of the kids I work with in juvenile court may not have a cell phone, or if they do have a cell phone, a lot of times it will only work when they have Wi-Fi. If they are not in an area where they have Wi-Fi, then they cannot communicate.

MS. CASTRO:
Our buses are Wi-Fi-equipped as well. So, a lot of them use the buses to access the Wi-Fi.

VINNY SPOTLESON (Sierra Club):
We are the largest environmental grassroots organization, and we want more people to ride the bus. First off on the safety aspect, you are much more likely to die in a car accident than with anything related to the bus. So every time somebody gets in a car, they are taking a much bigger risk than anybody boarding an RTC bus is taking. The buses are safe, but this would make them even safer. But the reason that we really like this is that it helps the efficiency. We want people to ride the bus. One of the main reasons people do not ride the bus is because it takes a long time to get where they are going. The bus is great for avoiding car pollution because pollution from vehicles is the number one source of pollution in Nevada right now. The more we can do to reduce that, the better it will be for our air quality, for our climate, for our health, et cetera. So for these buses to not have to wait for a police officer, especially for a minor incident—because if there is a major incident, the police can still be called; this does not preclude that—will keep the buses going faster. That will

make it more likely that people can get where they are going and be able to ride again the next time. We are in support because of the environmental benefits.

I just want to take one moment. I am also a high school teacher. I teach at Valley High School. A lot of my students ride the bus, and my wife worked for the Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth for over ten years, administering the Safe Place program. I can just say, both from the experience of my students that ride the bus and from her experience of running that Safe Place program, RTC does a fantastic job of taking care of our teenagers here in the [Las Vegas] Valley. The bus drivers are trained, they have the appropriate safeguards, they know what to do in all kinds of situations. From [when] a couple of high school students that were getting into it at school did not want to get expelled and took it to the bus to a homeless student that is in dire need of emergency services, RTC does a fantastic job.

LESLIE VEGA (Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada):
I am a public transit customer. Back in 2024, PLAN [Progressive Alliance of Nevada] was able to participate in RTC's Transit Service Development Group. We are in support of this bill. Safe and accessible public transportation is essential for all communities, especially those that rely on transit. Senate Bill 290 ensures that safety measures are implemented fairly and transparently. I would like to share that since 2023, I have relied on RTC, specifically the bus lines 109, the Centennial Express, and the 108, for daily transportation. As part of my work at PLAN, I collect and document experiences of transit riders, both at the Bonneville Transit Center and among PLAN's supporters. When I speak to riders, they share their experiences with me; they depend on RTC to get to their jobs, to important appointments with IRS, with medical specialists, appointments that cannot be rescheduled at their convenience and also job interviews.

What I have learned through my work and personal experience is that RTC drivers are under immense stress. They are focused on the road. They are operating large vehicles; sometimes, they serve as the primary authority figures on a vehicle that is traveling 45 mph with an average of 20 folks on the bus. For a safer, more efficient transit system, we must invest in solutions that directly address these challenges. A well-funded RTC can invest in mental health crisis teams to de-escalate situations before they become dangerous. They can improve infrastructure to create safer stops in transit centers and enhance operator training to equip the drivers with the skills to handle the

disruption safely. We need to strengthen transit safety for both riders and drivers. Senate Bill 290 will give RTC's security team the authority to remove disruptive and unlawful individuals from transit property, reducing service interruptions and making public transportation safer for the 150,000 people that depend on it daily. I urge you to vote in favor of S.B. 290 to strengthen security measures and protect drivers and their passengers.

LEONARDO BENAVIDES (University of Nevada, Las Vegas):
We are here today in support of S.B. 290. Our Criminal Justice Department did participate in the transit security discussion group as noted earlier and provided research associated with the bill's recommendation. Coming into this legislative session, one of our legislative priorities is campus safety. We believe that S.B. 290 will provide a safer, more reliable system by allowing security personnel to take appropriate action against disruptive passengers. It is an extension of campus safety because many of our students and staff depend on this public transit. So we are in support of this bill as a necessary step toward a safer transit environment for all riders, including our university community. We appreciate RTC for their continued collaboration and partnership with UNLV, and we are happy to support this bill today.

MR. HARPER:
The City of North Las Vegas is strongly in support of this bill. This is important legislation. Having safe, reliable public transportation is essential. The Regional Transportation Commission has done an excellent job at figuring out the best way forward, putting together the process and the procedures in order to roll this out properly, and we have every confidence in them.

JOHN JONES (Clark County District Attorney's Office):
As mentioned by the presenters, my office did participate in the transit security discussion group, and we just wanted to get our support of S.B. 290 on the record.

MICHAEL HILLERBY (Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County):
Here to add our support to the bill and thank our colleagues in southern Nevada for a great deal of hard work on a very thoughtful approach to the problem.

MR. CHERRY:
Henderson City Councilman Jim Seebock sits on the RTC Board of Commissioners. We value the services that are provided to our community.

Whether for those who live in Henderson and rely on public transit or those who come to our community for work, to enjoy our parks and recreational programming or to just to visit friends and family, it is important that we keep everyone safe. I am proud to add my ditto here on S.B. 290.

MR. HOJJATY:
I support this bill even though I am a cab driver. I am the local chapter leader of Strong Towns Las Vegas. We are an organization that represents transit-oriented development. We hope that this bill would increase transit use. We see more bus rapid transit lane safety as very, very important. I live next door to the Palms [Casino Resort]. If I want to get to The Strip, [public transit] is a lot more efficient and quicker than having to drive into The Strip and get into the parking, even if it is for free. This is going to really help us a lot. There are people that will use taxis because they do not want to use buses because they are concerned about safety, and a lot of those people may not even have the money for a taxi. More transit use is going to clear up the lanes so we have better traffic flow driving around.

KELLY CROMPTON (City of Las Vegas):
I would like to echo the comments of those who have gone before me. The City's Multi-Agency Outreach Resource Engagement (MORE) Team partners with RTC to provide resources to those experiencing hardship. Public transit is a vital resource for many of those individuals. The City's MORE Team also participated in the transit security discussion group; therefore, we are here in support of S.B. 290.

HENRY LAY:
I am a resident of Senate District No. 3. I am a student at Clark High School and a member of the high school Democrats. On behalf of our club, I support S.B. 290.

MR. CARLO:
I am a fan of Strong Towns Las Vegas. We had a meeting last week, and actually, I was talking to a young lady. She was telling me she felt very unsafe in Las Vegas, walking to the stores, even taking the bus transit. I am in support of this bill, but I am very surprised how long it has taken you guys to actually give the security officers clearance and jurisdiction to be able to remove a disruptive person off the bus. It is so common sense, and then it took [you] 30 minutes to even talk about it. I do want to say that I appreciate the RTC

drivers, and I was actually impressed by the Chair talking about the app and parents. That should be the focus; kids should be the focus. We should put children first, and the app needs some integration. It needs to be much better. If you look at the app, the app has not changed since the whole time I have lived here. It could be more interactive. Parents need to be hooked up on the app with their kids where they can monitor their own child, wherever their child's going. But the app could be like five times better. I would say also think about raising the fare. We would have less of these bums causing trouble on the bus if we just raise the price a little bit. So that is another option.

BRITTANY WALKER (City Attorney, City of Boulder City):
I am calling to express my support for S.B. 290.

ASHLEY COLE (Area General Manager, Transdev North America):
I represent and manage all of the operators that operate the fixed route service for RTC. This bill is very important to not only our operators but the customers. We have a lot of experiences where a disruptive customer can impact not only the timeliness of the other customers getting to their destination, but in some cases, they create conflict with other customers. The security officers are not able to do anything to assist not only the operators, but the customers that are impacted. So Transdev is in support of this bill as well.

AL ROJAS:
I am in total support of this bill, and I am hoping we have more bills that are going to protect our drivers. We saw on TV here where one driver got hit by a homeless person and then he got stomped on, broke some ribs. I would like to see at least a cage and maybe some tougher prosecution where our bus drivers have more protection [and] if you touch a bus driver, your penalties are higher than just assaulting a normal citizen.

MS. MARTINEZ:
We are 100 percent behind this bill. I just hope that the bus drivers are similar to RTC Washoe where they will have the plexiglass to protect them. Hopefully, there will be like an alert for a customer to press to send distress calls.

TIA SMITH (American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada):
American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada was a part of the discussion in creating this policy, and we want to state our appreciation for being included in the discussion.

SENATOR NGUYEN:
I appreciate this committee's time and thoughtful questions, especially around how we handle juvenile issues. It is definitely something that we are going to get back together with this big group of people to see what we currently do. Again, this bill is meant to use appropriate de-escalation techniques. I believe in some circumstances right now, just like when you are removing any disruptive passenger, you have to call Metro or a law enforcement agency. I imagine that would be the same with children right now. So rather than have them enter into a juvenile detention situation because they are being removed from the bus, hopefully, with the passage of this bill, we will also have other tools to also de-escalate and create a safe environment for those children that are being asked leave the bus as well. We will continue and follow up with the committee to answer all the questions that you have regarding that and any possible amendments.

CHAIR FLORES:
With that, we will go ahead and close out the hearing on S.B. 290 and open the hearing on Senate Concurrent Resolution (S.C.R.) 2.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 2: Recognizes the "Fruit Loop" as a historical LGBTQ+ landmark in Clark County, Nevada. (BDR R-588)

SENATOR FABIAN DOÑATE (Senatorial District No. 10):
I have a presentation (Exhibit L contains copyrighted material. Original is available upon request from the Research Library.) on S.C.R. 2 which recognizes the "Fruit Loop" as a historical landmark in Clark County, Nevada. Last September, you can see this news article, Exhibit L, I was tagged in a couple of TikTok videos showing Las Vegas patrons running across the street. This was on Paradise Road and Naples Drive, right by UNLV. In the video, I noticed that there were folks that were running across the street because there was no crosswalk available for them. It caught my attention, and it made me question, why was there not a stoplight and a crosswalk available? This news article was published; it interviewed a few community business folks. At that time, I submitted a request to Clark County so that Clark County Public Works could investigate and see what infrastructure [they] needed to be able to repair the missing crosswalk. Through that moment, we were able to bring together community leaders. I felt that it was probably important to talk to the business owners in my district to understand their concerns regarding the infrastructure. Through that process, I learned that they had been asking for better

infrastructure not just recently, but actually for the last three decades. In fact, our conversations uncovered a long history of struggles with the city or with the county due to the area's association with the community, and the absence of a stoplight was simply a bigger issue. That gave me the green light to start a conversation about how we can best honor the community and fix the infrastructure in this area.

The Fruit Loop located on East Naples Drive, South Paradise Road and South University Center Drive in Las Vegas is a historically significant LGBTQ+ hub, fostering activism, community-building and cultural contributions since the 1950s. The Nevada Legislature, through this bill, would officially recognize the Fruit Loop as a historical landmark, emphasizing its role in promoting inclusivity, acceptance and understanding. Through the proposed amendment (Exhibit M), the Fruit Loop would collaborate with the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority and the Division of Tourism to enhance its visibility through marketing materials and directional language with costs underwritten by the Lambda Business Association. The recognition aims to preserve the legacy of the Fruit Loop, support the history of Nevada and encourage the ongoing advocacy for the area's cultural and historical significance. The foundation of the Fruit Loop as a center for queer entrepreneurship dates back to the 1950s when Club Black Magic first opened. These early businesses were more than just bars and nightclubs; they were safe spaces for many of the community members to gather and build connections at a time when such spaces were rare and deeply needed.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Fruit Loop began to see a broader mix of businesses. The founding of the *Las Vegas Bugle* in 1986 established a media presence that gave a voice to the community. In 1990, the Lambda Studio Community apartments opened, marking a rare example of housing specifically marketed to queer residents. The 1990s saw a boom in nightlife and retail. In 1992 the Spotlight Cafe opened at 4637 South Paradise Road, and the video store [on the slide] opened the same year. Meanwhile, the Bright Pink Literature bookstore became a key cultural touchstone before transitioning to Get Booked in 1993. A major milestone came in early July 2000 with the first published reference to the area as known as the Fruit Loop. This marked a significant shift where the Fruit Loop was no longer in an informal gathering place but a recognized cultural and business district. The Fruit Loop was more than just a name too; actual Fruit Loops were distributed at protests and

festivals as a symbolic token of solidarity. Even after the closure of some legacy venues, new businesses have stepped in to fill the void.

Current infrastructure does not reflect this longstanding community space. Just as we have seen with other cultural districts like Chinatown, official designation and signage will not only validate the historical importance of this area, but it would also help with the safety and tourism aspects as well. The Lambda Business Association has stepped up, offering to underwrite the cost of the requested directional signage. Through the amendment, the Nevada Department of Transportation would work with the Fruit Loop for their willingness to install the proposed exit signs in the signage to recognize the historical landmark of [the area]. This is a key step in making sure that the Fruit Loop is more visible and accessible to both locals and visitors, driving more business to this area. Lastly, by celebrating the area's rich cultural history and its ongoing impact on the community, we can ensure that the Fruit Loop's legacy continues to thrive for generations to come.

ROB SCHLEGEL:
At one time, I had the Bright Pink Literature bookstore, which was a feminist, gay, lesbian and recovery bookstore. I also managed the Lambda Apartments, which was a gay and lesbian apartment complex owned by Ed Uehling at the far end of East Naples Drive. I also published the *Las Vegas Bugle* newspaper at the time. The Fruit Loop was called that because it had to do with the airport making a loop coming off what is now University Drive. They would have the cars turn onto Naples Drive, head west and then they would either turn south onto Paradise Road to go to Tropicana, or they would turn to the north on Paradise Road, going to Flamingo. The airport distinctively did not want the gay and lesbian bars to be in the area. The airport under Bob Broadbent and Randy Walker worked to get rid of the parking in the area. The name Fruit Loop was kind of an in your face to Bob Broadbent and Randy Walker because they were trying to put the bars out of business by taking away their parking. To do that, they bought the vacant lot next door to the bar now known as Piranha. At one time, 100 to 200 cars would park there every night, maybe 300 cars on the weekend. I think that needs to be acknowledged.

Things have changed a lot. I think the airport is supportive of the gay and lesbian business district. The county has been very supportive and even RTC in changing the streets in the area. They changed Naples Road from one way to two way. We were able to add that stoplight and the first crosswalk on the

north side back in the year that we helped get Chris Giunchigliani elected to the Clark County Commission. We were only able to get one crosswalk on the north side. Recently, because of additional traffic, we worked with RTC and Senator Doñate to get a crosswalk on the south side of the intersection of Naples Road and Paradise Drive, so I am in support of this. I just want the historical record to reflect the reason it is called the Fruit Loop. It is very similar to the word queer. Once upon a time, the word queer was a derogatory comment about people. You would be called queer, and it was meant as an insult. Fruit was the same way. Our friend Ed Uehling, who owned property in the area, came up with the idea of calling it the Fruit Loop, reclaiming the word fruit and making it into a positive thing instead of a negative slur.

GARRETT PATTIANI:
I am here in support of S.C.R. 2, recognizing the Fruit Loop as a historical site. I am honored to be here as a business owner, historian and an advocate for the LGBTQ+ community. I am the co-owner of *QVegas Magazine*, the [successor] to Mr. Schlegel's magazine which is part of this longstanding history. Since 1978, I have served on the board of The LGBTQ+ Center of southern Nevada. I was the director of events of Aid for AIDS of Nevada, and I also work at the Gipsy and Piranha Nightclubs in the heart of what we call the Fruit Loop. As a Nevada native with deep family roots in Las Vegas since 1955, I am committed to preserving the legacy of LGBTQ+ spaces that have shaped this city.

The Fruit Loop is a cultural and economic powerhouse. The Fruit Loop is more than just a nightlife district. It is a historic and economic anchor for LGBTQ+ tourism in Las Vegas. Thousands of visitors come here every weekend, contributing millions of dollars to the local economy. Las Vegas is a global LGBTQ+ destination, and the Fruit Loop plays a crucial role in that success. The venues in this district have defined the LGBTQ+ nightlife for decades. Piranha is one of the busiest LGBTQ+ nightclubs in the nation. Gipsy Nightclub, an LGBTQ+ Institution for over 40 years, was once home to Disco Fever and Village Station before the name change and was prominent in nightlife in the 1970s and 1980s, similar to disco venues like the ones in New York today. After a $5 million renovation, these two clubs are the top-ranked nightclubs in all of Las Vegas. In recent awards, Piranha and Gipsy took the top two places for the best of Las Vegas. Piranha placed third overall, contending with the high-end ones on The Strip. But the Fruit Loop is more than just these two clubs; it has been a home for several businesses that have played vital roles in the community.

Quadz Video Bar, previously known as the Buffalo, has been a longstanding favorite for gaming and socializing, keeping the tradition of welcoming LGBTQ+ spaces alive and contributing to the gaming sector with Piranha and Gipsy as well. Get Booked is one of the longest running LGBTQ+ bookstores in the country. Each of these businesses has contributed to making the Fruit Loop not only a place for nightlife but a gathering place, [a source of] tax revenue for the city, [a locale for] the wedding industry—where we have ceremonies, bachelor and bachelorette parties—and of course a cultural landmark for our community. It is a hub beyond nightlife. It also serves as more than just a place to dance. This is a place where history, entertainment and community intersect. Both clubs partner with Sin City Classic, the world's largest LGBTQ+ sporting event that comes to Las Vegas, as well as other major festivals. We host fundraisers, art shows, fashion events, drag brunches, and it brings people in from all walks of life, not just the LGBTQ+ community. A lot of our allies love these events. Gipsy was also the State's first AIDS fundraiser in 1983.

Today, our weekly ShowKids Sundays actually continues the tradition of featuring Las Vegas Strip performers, ensuring that local talent has a space to shine. We hire and book RuPaul's Drag Race queens from past and present seasons. We showcase international DJs and entertainers and keep Las Vegas at the forefront of LGBTQ+ nightlife. For decades, the Fruit Loop has welcomed entertainment icons who embraced our community: Liberace, Siegfried and Roy, Cher, Bette Midler, Joan Rivers, Neil Sedaka and Kenny Kerr, just to name a few. Janet Jackson has visited the establishment for years and just recently revisited, showing that it remains a cultural touchpoint for celebrities and allies alike. It matters because preserving our community's history is so important to create to provide spaces for protecting and evolving entertainment and uplifting our community. I urge you to pass this bill and join other cities like New York's Stonewall National Monument and San Francisco's Castro District and give the Fruit Loop the recognition that it deserves.

BILLY PILESKY (Quadz Video Bar):
Quadz Video Bar is an LGBTQ+ bar located in the heart of the Fruit Loop. As members of the LGBTQ+ community, it is important for us that we have a place where we could go and are free to be ourselves without fear of either being discriminated against or harassed. A place where everybody is welcome to go and be themselves and not only have fun but also where they could feel safe. That is what the Fruit Loop has provided to the LGBTQ+ community for decades now, so the recognition of the Fruit Loop as a historical area or

landmark helps to recognize and confirm how important this area is to the LGBTQ+ community. The recognition of this as a historic area will hopefully promote more gay-owned and gay-operated businesses to come into the area to help build up the area. It is something that will also help to preserve this area for future generations, so it will continue to be a safe place for members of the LGBTQ+ community. I urge you guys to pass this resolution.

SENATOR OHRENSCHALL:
Through the years, I have attended many different events in that area. One of the most moving ones that stands out in my memory is going to a National Coming Out Day event and seeing people crying, calling their family and opening up to them. It was very powerful, and it will always stick with me. One question I have for Mr. Schlegel, my recollection was when you had your bookstore in that area, this was a time when if someone was wanting to find books exploring their sexuality or gender identity, there was no Amazon. There were very few internet booksellers. The kind of books that you had on your shelves were not things someone could find at Borders or Barnes & Noble. It was something very special for Las Vegas then for people to be able to access books at your bookstore. Is my memory correct?

MR. SCHLEGEL:
Yes, the only place to buy gay, lesbian, feminist and recovery books was at Bright Pink Literature. We served the needs of the gay and lesbian community, our primary market, but we also served the feminist market. We also served people working in the behavioral healthcare market and in the recovery market because they did not have any books available for them or their clients. At the time, places like Barnes & Noble did not even exist. We sort of stopped selling books eventually because Barnes & Noble took over the cream of the crop of what we would sell. We might have 3,000 or 5,000 books in the store, but you would have maybe 400 or 500 books that would turn over and sell repeatedly, and that was your income. When the big chain bookstores came along, they took the books that would sell repeatedly and kind of sucked the market out from underneath us. Then the internet, Amazon and so forth, killed off most of the chain bookstores also.

[Bright Pink Literature] was a gathering place. It was a place where people called; we were kind of an information switchboard at the time. There was not a gay and lesbian community center, so we took those calls at my newspaper office or at the bookstore. In fact, the current Get Booked still has the original

number from my bookstore and from the *Las Vegas Bugle*. It was a cultural place, and it was a gathering place. I loved working in that bookstore.

TONY RAMIREZ (Make the Road Nevada):
We are in support of this resolution and urge the committee to support as well.

ED UEHLING:
These are old figures, but of the 40 million tourists who visit Las Vegas, it is calculated about 7 percent of them are gay or identify as gay or LGBTQ+ persons. But this 7 percent brings 14 percent of the income from tourists. As I say, these are old figures. I cannot imagine that they have changed much. The Fruit Loop only attracts about 10 percent of the 2.8 million LGBTQ+ tourists. It is really important that we be able to develop additional businesses in that area. I really request that you change the borders that were on the map at least, so you take in the full six or seven acres going west on East Naples Drive to the drainage canal, the dead end of that street.

DAVID PARKS:
Without being redundant I simply like to voice my support for S.C.R. 2.

ANDRE WADE (State Director, Silver State Equality):
We are in support of S.C.R. 2. Recognizing the Fruit Loop as a historical site coincides with its decades long history of being a hub of LGBTQ+ businesses and social activities. We urge you to support S.C.R. 2.

MATTHEW WILKIE:
I'm just calling in support.

ERIKA CASTRO (Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada):
I am calling today in full support of S.C.R. 2 because as a lesbian kid, I always craved a place that felt safe and welcoming. Being undocumented and queer, [I was] always wondering where I truly belong. I wanted to be surrounded by people who were like me, not questioning my existence or poking fun at it because they did not understand. As an adult, I have turned to the Fruit Loop at many points of my life. I celebrated my twenty-first birthday there. I healed from breakups and found life-long friends on the dance floor. But more importantly, I found community. I found a space that does not look at me funny for the way that I love, that celebrates our existence and honors our differences. These spaces are critical, especially at a time when we are seeing

the heightened persecution of the community. This resolution sends a strong message that our communities will not be erased; instead, they will be recognized for their contributions to the broader community. I urge you to join our clear celebration and support this resolution to finally recognize the Fruit Loop as a historical LGBTQ+ community.

MR. CARLO:
I am just utterly repulsed by these people who you guys are giving a platform, and [I am here] to testify against this horrible bill. I want you guys to consider how the nation voted for Trump, how we believe in his policies. The Democrat party is at an all-time low. You guys actually need a new platform. But the main reason why I am against it is because I believe in the Bible. I believe in God. I believe in natural law. To promote homosexual behavior is to deny your own creation into this world. Homosexual people do not reproduce. This goes against God. May I remind you of Sodom and Gomorrah when God rained fire and brimstone. This city is already known by Sin City. It is already known for being a city that is ungodly. This is an ungodly bill, and by you guys promoting people to be more fruity with the Fruit Loop, you are only bringing the judgment and wrath of God further on this city. We cannot run from God. If you guys pass this bill, I promise you, it brings the wrath of God further on us. Do not ever claim his name and also claim to be for homosexuality. These are dynamically opposed to one another. God rains fire and brimstone—now I know where I can go and preach. Now I know exactly where I need to go. You guys have exposed yourselves. You guys should have been cast out of the city. [The resolution] also goes against the historical nature of this town. How many miners do you think were really homosexuals? This Fruit Loop has nothing to do with the real history of the men who built this town.

MR. HOJJATY:
I do respect the efforts of Mr. Ed Uehling. I wish him the best with all these efforts. However, I do believe that it is better if this is done by the County Commission. Also, about the crosswalk, hopefully it is safer. I am a cab driver; I drive through Naples Drive. It is very dangerous.

CHAIR FLORES:
I have three opposition letters (Exhibit N, Exhibit O and Exhibit P) to S.C.R. 2. With that we will go ahead and close out the hearing and move to public comment.

MR. HOJJATY:
I just wanted to make some basic comments about housing to give you some news and update the headlines. There are efforts as a bipartisan bill to expand federal land to build more housing. I am very grateful about that because we have to know how we got in this mess. In the late 1990s, there was a federal land-related bill supported by both [U.S.] Senators Reid and Ensign, which is responsible partially for the housing mess that we are in. Not to mention, both Senators voted for the bailouts of the late 2000s, and that allowed Wall Street to buy up a lot of those homes and shrunk the available land. We have to know how we got here, and I am glad that policies are being modified. Available land is one part of the equation. There are many other factors [to take] into consideration.

However, I am very concerned about how this growth is going to take place. These types of routes that are being built are very concerning. They are unsafe for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers. We have to make sure that growth [is] on the outskirts because that is going to be done more effectively. Are we going to grow the use of transit on the outskirts? Are we going to have parking requirements? All these things are important when it comes to housing. Are we going to have roundabouts? Because they are talking about a traffic light bill. If they are inefficient, we have to stop building them on the outskirts. I want this to be done more effectively. We can grow, but we have to do it more efficiently, and hopefully later on, I can show you some bills that have been passed by the Washington State Legislature that remove parking requirements for a lot of these new housing projects.

MR. ROJAS:
We started a neighborhood watch group over by Lake Mead and Hollywood Boulevard. We are all networked from Dollar Tree, all the 7-11s, all four McDonald's, Walgreens, Walmart and the homeowners' association (HOA). I live in the HOA. The success that we are having is that we are attacking homeless people as they build their camps. These guys are like a potato. Once they start building a camp, they start digging in and building roots, and we need more services to quickly go out there and address these encampments. Before we move them out, we need to identify what their needs are, what it is going to take them to get closer back in the game. What are the first steps or two steps to improve the situation and get away from that encampment lifestyle? We do not have enough. We have been working really well with a group called HELP [Housing Expansion Through Local Partnerships]. We have been working

with Metro, but we need more services that will go out there, identify what their problem is, then get rid of those encampments and get them help to move closer to a normal lifestyle. That is what we are doing. We have got about five encampments out. I have trespassed personally with my group called Safe Communities Network. That is the approach that we are taking, not just moving them around [but] identifying them. The program HELP has a website or an app where they are logging every person that they talk to, to get a profile and get a count. Hopefully, we get more legislation [about this].

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CHAIR FLORES:
Having no further business, the Senate Committee on Government Affairs adjourns at 6:13 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Spencer Jones,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Edgar Flores, Chair

DATE:

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	**Exhibit Letter**	**Introduced on Minute Report Page No.**	**Witness / Entity**	**Description**
	A	1		Agenda
	B	1		Attendance Roster
S.B. 51	C	3	Kelly McNeil / Nevada League of Cities and Municipalities	Fact Sheet
S.B. 51	D	6	Mendy Elliott	Reno Housing Authority Support Letter
S.B. 51	E	6	Mendy Elliott	Nevada Rural Housing Support Letter
S.B. 51	F	9	Senator Edgar Flores	Dana Sorenson Opposition Letter
S.B. 51	G	9	Senator Edgar Flores	Reva Crump Opposition Letter
S.B. 51	H	9	Senator Edgar Flores	George and Darla Lee Opposition Letter
S.B. 51	I	9	Senator Edgar Flores	Ann Sweder Opposition Letter
S.B. 290	J	10	Aaron Brown	Testimony
S.B. 290	K	11	Maria Nieto Orta / Regional Transport Commission of Southern Nevada	Presentation
S.C.R. 2	L	26	Senator Fabian Doñate	Presentation
S.C.R. 2	M	27	Senator Fabian Doñate	Proposed Amendment
S.C.R. 2	N	33	Senator Edgar Flores	Reva Crump Opposition Letter
S.C.R. 2	O	33	Senator Edgar Flores	Ann Sweder Opposition Letter
S.C.R. 2	P	33	Senator Edgar Flores	Bruce Parks Opposition Letter