

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 8, 2001

1:10 p.m.

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HIGHWAY AND ROAD SAFETY, WINTER TRAILS STUDY, GRAVEL TO ASPHALT PROGRAM

TAPES

01-12, SIDES A & B

CALL TO ORDER

REPRESENTATIVE VIC KOHRING, Chair, called the House Transportation Standing Committee to order at 1:10 p.m.

PRESENT

Committee members present were Representatives Kohring, Kapsner, Kookesh, Scalzi, Wilson, and Ogan. Also present was Representative Chenault.

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

MARTIN OTT, Chief, Planning & Administrative Services, Northern Region Office, Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF), provided the committee with copies of the Draft Winter Transportation Study prepared by DOT&PF. He then provided a brief overview of the report.

DENNIS POSHARD, Special Assistant, Office of the Commissioner, DOT&PF, provided preliminary comments regarding the "State Road/Highway Safety" agenda items. He introduced DOT&PF teleconference attendees that would answer committee questions.

AVES D. THOMPSON, Director, Division of Measurement Standards & Commercial Vehicle Enforcement, DOT&PF, provided information regarding commercial truck inspections and enforcement actions for non-complying vehicles.

MURPH O'BRIEN, Assistant to the Director of the Central Region Office, DOT&PF, provided information describing the status of the "Palmer Hayflats" lighting of the Glenn Highway. He stated that DOT&PF had started preliminary engineering to identify

project costs to construct the light system and to obtain federal project approval. He also addressed that the Matanuska-/Susitna Borough and the Matanuska Electric Cooperative had agreed to pay for the operations and maintenance costs for a three-year start-up period.

CHAIR KOHRING inquired whether any other communities had to pay for operating street lights along state roads and highways and what was going to happen after the three-year agreement was up.

MR. O'BRIEN stated that no other communities were paying for lighting and that after the three-year period, DOT&PF would assume the operations and maintenance costs.

REPRESENTATIVE OGAN emphasized his frustration that although \$1 million was appropriated three years ago, DOT&PF has not completed the project. He asked when the construction would occur.

MR. O'BRIEN stated that it would be placed into the Fiscal Year 02 construction program.

REPRESENTATIVE CHENAULT expressed concerns about inadequate winter road maintenance in the Nikiski area on the Kenai Peninsula, especially in light of the closing of the DOT&PF Nikiski Maintenance Facility a few years ago. He added that he knew the few DOT&PF maintenance workers in the area and that they were doing the best they could based on manpower and equipment limitations.

FRANK WINTERS, Director, Statewide Maintenance, DOT&PF, stated that equipment was staged at the Nikiski facility, but that due to a fire when the equipment was previously stored elsewhere, some of the Nikiski equipment had been destroyed. He expressed gratitude that the legislature had not cut DOT&PF maintenance funds last year and hoped that would be the case this year as well.

REPRESENTATIVE OGAN raised the issue of crack sealing as a preventative road maintenance item that was not being done. He inquired whether DOT&PF would support legislation that would specifically allow state prisoners to be trained and to perform crack sealing.

FRANK RICHARDS, State Maintenance Engineer, DOT&PF, described crack sealing procedures and agreed that not enough was being

done, which resulted in more significant maintenance issues. He stated that crack sealing was not a highly technical skill.

MR. POSHARD stated that the DOT&PF would be happy to look at any proposed legislation that would address using prisoners to do maintenance.

MR. RICHARDS provided a description of the construction performed when paving an existing gravel road and how it was more basic and cheaper than an engineered road construction project. He provided a handout entitled "Gravel to Pavement Program," which listed the roads paved and under contract to be paved under this program, which started in 1998. Mr. Richards stated that one primary purpose of the program was to reduce DOT&PF maintenance costs for grading. He added that other considerations were made for air quality of nearby residents and for improving travel.

REPRESENTATIVE SCALZI questioned the long-term maintenance costs of these roads in that paved roads cost more to maintain than gravel roads after about 7-10 years, which is why local governments were hesitant to accept state roads paved under this program for future maintenance.

MR. RICHARDS agreed that after the 7-10 year period, maintenance costs were higher for paved roads.

REPRESENTATIVE SCALZI expressed concern for what might be happening to the long-range DOT&PF maintenance budget and that the DOT&PF and the committee should be concerned about this issue.

CHAIR KOHRING asked if DOT&PF reviewed the proposed Community Gravel to Asphalt Program, in the committee meeting packet, and what was DOT&PF's opinion of it.

MR. POSHARD answered that the DOT&PF had not looked into the subject in any detail, but would be willing to work with the committee on the concept.

COMMITTEE ACTION

The committee took no action.

ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR KOHRING adjourned the House Transportation Standing

Committee meeting at 2:22 p.m.

NOTE: The meeting was recorded and handwritten log notes were taken. A copy of the tape(s) and log notes may be obtained by contacting the House Records Office at State Capitol, Room 3, Juneau, Alaska 99801 (mailing address) (907) 465-2214, and after adjournment of the second session of the Twenty-Second Alaska State Legislature this information may be obtained by contacting the Legislative Reference Library at (907) 465-3808.