

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 15, 2001

1:12 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Vic Kohring, Chair
Representative Drew Scalzi
Representative Peggy Wilson
Representative Albert Kookesh

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Beverly Masek, Vice Chair
Representative Scott Ogan
Representative Mary Kapsner

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 151

SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 151

"An Act naming the William R. Wood Fairbanks International Airport; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED SSHB 151 OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL NO. 79

"An Act naming the Fred Zharoff Memorial Bridge."

- MOVED SB 79 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS ACTION

BILL: SSHB 151

SHORT TITLE: WILLIAM WOOD FAIRBANKS INTERN'TL AIRPORT

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) WHITAKER

Jrn-Date	Jrn-Page		Action
02/26/01	0438	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/26/01	0438	(H)	TRA
03/12/01	0542	(H)	SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE INTRODUCED
03/12/01	0542	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/12/01	0542	(H)	TRA
03/15/01		(H)	TRA AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 17

BILL: SB 79

SHORT TITLE:FRED ZHAROFF MEMORIAL BRIDGE

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) AUSTERMAN

Jrn-Date	Jrn-Page		Action
02/08/01	0309	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/08/01	0309	(S)	TRA
02/09/01	0327	(S)	COSPONSOR(S): LINCOLN, COWDERY
02/20/01		(S)	TRA AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/20/01		(S)	Moved Out of Committee MINUTE(TRA)
02/21/01	0450	(S)	TRA RPT 5DP
02/21/01	0451	(S)	DP:COWDERY, WILKEN, WARD, ELTON, TAYLOR
02/21/01	0451	(S)	FN1: ZERO(DOT)
02/26/01		(S)	RLS AT 10:45 AM FAHRENKAMP 203
02/27/01	0519	(S)	RULES TO CALENDAR 2/27/01
02/27/01	0521	(S)	READ THE SECOND TIME
02/27/01	0521	(S)	COSPONSOR(S): PEARCE, PHILLIPS, WILKEN,
02/27/01	0521	(S)	TORGERSON, GREEN
02/27/01	0521	(S)	ADVANCED TO THIRD READING UNAN CONSENT
02/27/01	0521	(S)	READ THE THIRD TIME SB 79
02/27/01	0521	(S)	PASSED Y20 N-
02/27/01	0524	(S)	TRANSMITTED TO (H)
02/27/01	0524	(S)	VERSION: SB 79
02/28/01	0452	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/28/01	0452	(H)	TRA
03/09/01	0530	(H)	CROSS SPONSOR(S): STEVENS
03/15/01		(H)	TRA AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 17

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE JIM WHITAKER
Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room 411
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182
POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SSHB 151.

KURT PARKAN, Deputy Commissioner

Office of the Commissioner
Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
3132 Channel Drive
Juneau, Alaska 99801-7898
POSITION STATEMENT: Provided department's position on SSHB 151.

CLIFFORD STONE, Staff
to Senator Alan Austerman
Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room 417
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182
POSITION STATEMENT: Presented sponsor statement for SB 79, on behalf of Senator Austerman.

ACTION NARRATIVE

TAPE 01-19, SIDE A
Number 0001

CHAIR VIC KOHRING called the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:12 p.m. Members present at the call to order were Representatives Kohring, Scalzi, Wilson, and Kookesh.

SSHB 151-WILLIAM WOOD FAIRBANKS INTERN'TL AIRPORT

Number 0079

CHAIR KOHRING announced the first order of business would be the SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 151, "An Act naming the William R. Wood Fairbanks International Airport; and providing for an effective date."

Number 0161

REPRESENTATIVE JIM WHITAKER, Alaska State Legislature, sponsor of SSHB 151, declared that Dr. William R. Wood was a great man. He was a poet, an educator, a builder, and an "inspirer" for those of those who lived in "our" community. He said that Dr. Wood took "us" to a farther place than we would have been otherwise, which is the essence of his greatness. He went on to say that Dr. Wood made very few enemies along the way, and that he was always respectful.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITAKER showed the House Transportation Standing Committee a letter that Dr. Wood wrote to him on September 30, 2000, Representative Whitaker's 50th birthday. He read:

Sir James,
Sorry to have missed the gathering of the faithful. There are times the ancient bones say no. But top of the best in your quest to serve. Jim, you have the courage of conviction, the clarity of thinking, and the strength of will to persist and prevail. It's not an easy task, or always pleasant. It will take a lot of hope, confidence, and a tinge of humility. As you listen and even perhaps learn, reach for the far horizon, so that humankind may continue as a very special breed, brains and compassion to strive toward making a better place to live and a way of life for all. It can be done. Wood

REPRESENTATIVE WHITTAKER mentioned that this letter hangs on his wall.

CHAIR KOHRING commented that this was a very "neat memento."

REPRESENTATIVE WHITAKER stated that Dr. Wood inspired him by those "few, simple words, but so eloquently and simply spoken." He said that Dr. Wood inspired thousands of people to be a "little better." He read the following letter-to-the-editor from the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner:

I was new to Alaska in 1980, living in Anderson, 75 miles south of Fairbanks, attending UAF [University of Alaska Fairbanks] rural college classes and traveling to Fairbanks frequently. One day I was waiting for my ride outside the J.C. Penney store, when a tall, distinguished, gray-haired gentleman came walking down the sidewalk. Almost abreast of me, he stooped to pick up a piece of litter and walked it over to a trashcan. Then he stood and smiled at me with genuine goodwill as if to say, "pass it on." I knew I had just met the famous Dr. William Wood, already known to me through his writing and his name on the busiest building on UAF's campus. I also knew in that instant, without a word between us, that here was a man who cared, a man of great moral character who had the stuff of greatness.

Later, when I was an intern at the [Fairbanks Daily] News-Miner, I was privileged to meet Dr. Wood for real, when he came upstairs to greet everyone and turn in his column. But that first meeting is the one that

struck me as one of those turning points in my life. What a great lesson he taught me in a wordless 30seconds. How many people can do that?

REPRESENTATIVE WHITAKER remarked that this letter takes "us" to the essence of why the Fairbanks International Airport should be named the William R. Wood Fairbanks International Airport. It would enable people, for that brief moment they walk through the airport, to think about Dr. Wood, who asked "nothing more of life."

REPRESENTATIVE WHITAKER commented that for the last 15 years of Dr. Wood's life, their offices were 20 feet apart. He said that he and Dr. Wood ate lunch together everyday for seven years. Dr. Wood "truly didn't wanted anything more than to leave his community just a little better; that's all he wanted." So, if by renaming this airport to William R. Wood Fairbanks International Airport, conveys that message to the next generation, "we've done a very good thing."

Number 0571

REPRESENTATIVE SCALZI referred to a letter [not in packet] that, in good spirit, opposed this bill. The letter was depicting earlier comments by Representative Whitaker in regard to Dr. Wood's character, in that he wouldn't want anything for himself. This letter was not an opposition in a negative way.

Number 0610

REPRESENTATIVE WHITAKER replied that he does not want this bill for Dr. Wood; he wants it for his community. He said that he wants this name change for future-generation members to be able look at the plaque in the airport and think of Dr. Wood. He is sure that the plaque would read, "He wanted nothing more than to leave his community just a little bit better."

REPRESENTATIVE WHITAKER explained that the "very little" opposition that exists for this bill stems from the notion that Dr. Wood was not associated with aviation. However, many people who use the airport are not associated with aviation other than to use it [airport] as a community resource and transportation hub. Representative Whitaker said he wouldn't be against restricting this renaming to only someone who might be associated with aviation. However, overarching that is an opportunity to name the airport for a gentleman who has inspired several generations. Dr. Wood was a 94-year-old active man when

he passed away, and even on his deathbed he tried to "get things done." Representative Whitaker stated that he himself was "considerate" of those who want this honor reserved for one associated with aviation. But SSHB 151 reaches a larger community that "needs to be served for generations to come by Dr. Wood."

Number 0704

REPRESENTATIVE KOOKESH mentioned that the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport was probably named for someone who used the airport like "the rest of us." He wondered if the municipality of Fairbanks or boroughs supported SSHB 151, since he did not see any letters of support from them.

Number 0728

REPRESENTATIVE WHITAKER replied that "we" did not ask for any letters of support. But if there was a debate at the local level, they could probably obtain them.

Number 0755

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON made a motion to move SSHB 151 out of committee with individual recommendations and the zero fiscal note.

CHAIR KOHRING mentioned that Dr. Wood's name appears on other facilities but this honor is appropriate as well. He said that the concept of naming the airport after Dr. Wood is a good idea since it is in a central location, which would enable people to learn who Dr. Wood was and the things that he did for not only the Fairbanks area, but also the State of Alaska. So, this is an appropriate honor, even though there was not a direct connection between his work in education and transportation.

Number 0820

KURT PARKAN, Deputy Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF), stated that DOT&PF supports this legislation. He discussed the naming of airports. He said many airports in Alaska are named after prominent people in the community who were not necessarily aviators. When an airport serves as a gateway to a community, "it's good to have the airport named after someone who is highly respected and well-loved by the community." So, it is very

appropriate that Dr. Wood be the name that people see when entering the Fairbanks International Airport.

MR. PARKAN explained that Dr. Wood was a charter member of the airport advisory council at the Fairbanks International Airport. He was one of, the most -if not the most- active members of that committee. He said that Dr. Wood attended nearly every meeting unless he was ill. If he was unable to attend a meeting, he had a staff person take notes for him. As recently as the January 23 meeting, which Dr. Wood could not attend, he called and apologized to the director for not being present.

Number 0917

CHAIR KOHRING brought attention to a concern last year that the naming of public roads and different projects might be a "little excessive." He mentioned that [the legislature] named the Bruce Heckler Parkway and the Eisenhower Corridor in Anchorage. He said that it seems that every year there are two to three things that are named.

MR. PARKAN replied that this could create a problem over time, if "we are naming every five miles of road by a different person." However, when a name change relates to something like an airport, it is different.

CHAIR KOHRING stated that he does not object to the names, as long as there is not a major fiscal impact on the state, besides maintaining signs.

MR. PARKAN commented that there is a cost associated with new signs, and "we generally absorb those costs."

CHAIR KOHRING asked Representative Whitaker if this name change would just require a plaque to note that it is the William R. Wood International Airport.

Number 0982

REPRESENTATIVE WHITAKER said that this has not been determined yet, but that he guesses the cost would be borne by the community.

Number 0996

CHAIR KOHRING stated that there being no objection [to the earlier motion], SSHB 151 was moved out of the House Transportation Standing Committee.

SB 79-FRED ZHAROFF MEMORIAL BRIDGE

CHAIR KOHRING announced that the next order of business would be SENATE BILL NO. 79, "An Act naming the Fred Zharoff Memorial Bridge."

Number 1020

CLIFFORD STONE, Staff to Senator Alan Austerman, Alaska State Legislature, presented SB 79 on behalf of Senator Austerman, sponsor. He explained that Senator Austerman and the community felt that this [bill] was an appropriate tribute to a man [former Representative and Senator Fred Zharoff] who gave his life to public service in the public schools of Kodiak and to the State of Alaska by serving with the House and Senate for almost 20 years.

MR. STONE said that Senator Austerman is the primary sponsor of SB 79, but there are 16 cosponsors, the most support that he has seen for "anything on this Senate side in quite some time."

Number 1076

MR. STONE stated that former Senator Zharoff was a person who could get things done, both professionally and as a friend. He mentioned that he knew Senator Zharoff, whom he refers to as Fred, for the 25 years that he lived on Kodiak. He said that Senator Zharoff was a "high-visibility-type person," who was always involved not only for his community that he represented, but also for what was good for Alaska. [This was also true] for anything he voted upon. Mr. Stone said that by seeing Senator Zharoff in Kodiak during the interim and interacting with him in Juneau, he saw that Senator Zharoff had a unique perspective. He also liked his "tutelage" in that they would run ideas past each other. Mr. Stone stated that he feels honored that he was able to be associated with somebody like him.

MR. STONE pointed out that Senator Zharoff was instrumental in obtaining funding for the Near Island Bridge, which has also been referred to as the "Bridge to Nowhere." Before the bridge, the island consisted of "just a bunch of cattle." But Senator Zharoff and the community had a vision that this island could be developed if there was a convenient means to get over to that

side [of the island]. A boat harbor expansion was planned for this area, which was an "integral piece to make it happen."

MR. STONE remarked that currently, there are moorage spaces for 600 vessels [on the island]. He said that the airplane float facility has been moved to the other side of Near Island. There are also two separate fisheries research centers on Near Island, and the possibility of a hotel and restaurant combination. The community is also beginning to open up other parcels to commercial enterprises, and there is a rock quarry on Near Island. [All of these developments] have allowed for tremendous economic expansion of the area.

MR. STONE commented that in recent years the bridge has been known as "Freddy's Bridge." However, Senator Austerman thought this name was a "little too cute" to put into legislation. So, "we" decided on the Fred Zharoff Memorial Bridge, a more formal name. But, "I suppose folks will continue to call it "Freddy's Bridge," he said.

Number 1236

REPRESENTATIVE SCALZI mentioned that he has been over the bridge. He said he remembers when people had to "skiff back and forth between the harbor and town years ago." He also remembers it [the bridge] being discussed and then constructed. He said the bridge is "much needed access." He went on to say he appreciates Senator Austerman bringing this [bill] forward and noted that he had the privilege of knowing former Senator Zharoff as well.

Number 1265

CHAIR KOHRING told a personal story that he can relate to [the bridge]. He said many years ago, he helped build a cannery in this area, in which he hung "1,800 sheets of sheetrock over a two-month period." He remembers looking at [Near] Island and thinking, "'I wonder if that is ever going to develop,' and when they built the bridge, I thought ... 'I wonder why they would build a bridge?'" In hindsight, he said Senator Zharoff was very prophetic and visionary in terms of recognizing how important the bridge was for the community. He said this is shown in the development of things such as the boat harbor and airplane facility on the island. He said:

It's a real honor to have this bill before us. I do support this. I really enjoyed working with Fred over

the years. He was a wonderful human being, and I had a very good friendship with him and he was an outstanding crib player. I'll certainly miss that; our friendship and his bipartisan approach to working with his colleagues in the legislature.

CHAIR KOHRING noted that Senator Zharoff's wife had sent him correspondence requesting the House Transportation Standing Committee's consideration of this legislation. He also pointed out that the mayor of the City of Kodiak, Carolyn L. Floyd, had provided a letter of support for SB 79, which is in the committee members' packets.

Number 1358

REPRESENTATIVE SCALZI made a motion to move SB 79 from the committee with individual recommendations and the attached zero fiscal note. There being no objection, SB 79 was moved from the House Transportation Standing Committee.

Number 1366

CHAIR KOHRING called an at-ease at 1:31 p.m. in order to hear a Department of Transportation Presentation on the Alaska ITS (Intelligent Transportation System) Statewide Strategy. [The cover sheet for the presentation can be found under the 1:40 p.m. minutes for the same date.]