

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 5, 2002

1:15 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Vic Kohring, Chair
Representative Scott Ogan
Representative Drew Scalzi
Representative Mary Kapsner
Representative Albert Kookesh

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Beverly Masek, Vice Chair
Representative Peggy Wilson

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 473
"An Act relating to transportation."

- HEARD AND HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 502
"An Act relating to the designation of and funding for rustic roads and highways; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD AND HELD

PREVIOUS ACTION

BILL: HB 473
SHORT TITLE: STATE TRANSPORTATION PLAN
SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) GREEN

| Jrn-Date | Jrn-Page | | Action |
|----------|----------|-----|------------------------------------|
| 02/19/02 | 2315 | (H) | READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS |
| 02/19/02 | 2315 | (H) | TRA, FIN |
| 02/19/02 | 2315 | (H) | REFERRED TO TRANSPORTATION |
| 03/05/02 | | (H) | TRA AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 17 |

BILL: HB 502
SHORT TITLE: RUSTIC ROADS AND HIGHWAYS

SPONSOR(S): TRANSPORTATION

| Jrn-Date | Jrn-Page | | Action |
|----------|----------|-----|------------------------------------|
| 02/27/02 | 2408 | (H) | READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS |
| 02/27/02 | 2408 | (H) | TRA, FIN |
| 02/27/02 | 2408 | (H) | REFERRED TO TRANSPORTATION |
| 03/05/02 | | (H) | TRA AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 17 |

WITNESS REGISTER

LAURA ACHEE, Staff
to Representative Joe Green
Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room 403
Juneau, Alaska 99801

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HB 473 on behalf of
Representative Green, sponsor.

GEOFFREY PARKER, Attorney
7931 Huckleberry Circle
Anchorage, Alaska 99502

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 473 on behalf of
his unnamed clients.

DEANNA ESSERT
6262 West Dimond
Anchorage, Alaska 99502

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 473.

RON CRENSHAW, Member
Citizen's Advisory Board
Trails and Recreational Access for Alaska (TRAAK)
428 West 12th
Juneau, Alaska 99801

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on HB 473 and HB 507.

MIKE DOWNING, Director/Chief Engineer
Division of Statewide Design & Engineering Services
Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF)
3132 Channel Drive
Juneau, Alaska 99801-7898

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on HB 473, saying it wouldn't
make DOT&PF or its process more efficient.

MIKE KRIEBER, Staff
to Representative Vic Kohring

Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room
Juneau, Alaska 99801

POSITION STATEMENT: As committee aide, answered question on HB 473; presented HB 502 on behalf of the House Transportation Standing Committee, sponsor, and answered questions.

REPRESENTATIVE JOE GREEN
Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room 403
Juneau, Alaska 99801

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as sponsor of HB 473.

ARTHUR (MARTY) QUAAS, President
South Knik River Community Council
(No address provided)

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on HB 502, saying he would like to see the Old Glenn Highway paved and the Denali Highway and Hatcher Pass Road unpaved.

LARRY DEVILBISS, School Board Member
Matanuska-Susitna Borough
HC04 Box 9302
Palmer, Alaska 99645

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 502 and characterized the condition of the Old Glenn Highway as unsafe.

JOHN SHANDELMEIER
Meier's Lake Road House
HC 72 Box 7193
Paxson, Alaska 99737

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 502.

PAUL BOOS
HC 60 Box 336E
Copper Center, Alaska 99573

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on HB 502, saying he did not want to see the Denali Highway paved; expressed some concerns with definitions in the bill.

RUTH McHENRY
HC 60 Box 336E
Copper Center, Alaska 99573

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on HB 502; supported keeping the bill simple.

PATRICK FITZGERALD

P.O. Box 10114
Fairbanks, Alaska 99710
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on HB 502, saying the Denali Highway should not be paved.

ROBIN DALE FORD
P.O. Box 10114
Fairbanks, Alaska 99710
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 502, but questioned the development of new rustic roads, especially for mineral development.

CHUCK KAUCIC
HC01 Box 6301
Palmer, Alaska 99645
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified against HB 502 because of the funding formula.

MYRON WRIGHT
13720 Karen Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99515
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on HB 502, saying that as a landscape photographer he is economically dependent on the Denali Highway's remaining in its present state.

MARY BETHE WRIGHT
13720 Karen Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99515
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on HB 502, expressing her wish to see rustic roads remain as they are.

DENNIS WESTON
P.O. Box 3019
Paxson, Alaska 99737
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on HB 502, saying the Denali Highway should remain as it is.

JOHN BRANT
P.O. Box 3021
Paxson, Alaska 99737
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 502, saying the Denali Highway should remain in its present state.

WARREN OLSON
5961 Orth Circle
Anchorage, Alaska 99507

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on HB 502, saying the Denali Highway should be left as it is and the money for paving it should be used on other projects.

THOMAS B. BRIGHAM, Director
Division of Statewide Planning
Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
3132 Channel Drive
Juneau, Alaska 99801-7898

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on HB 502, saying it could be made more simple and direct; reported that the Denali Highway project isn't being pursued aggressively and is on the "back burner."

ACTION NARRATIVE

TAPE 02-4, SIDE A
Number 001

CHAIR VIC KOHRING called the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:15 p.m. Members present at the call to order were Representatives Scalzi, Kapsner, Kookesh, and Kohring. Representative Ogan arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 473-STATE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

[Contains discussion relating to HB 502]

CHAIR KOHRING announced the first matter before the committee, HOUSE BILL NO. 473, "An Act relating to transportation."

Number 025

LAURA ACHEE, Staff to Representative Joe Green, Alaska State Legislature, presented HB 473 on behalf of Representative Green, sponsor. She explained that the legislation was drafted as a result of an Anchorage constituent's noticing a dramatic increase of Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) projects in the planning stage. This bill would allow the legislature to have a chance to reevaluate projects if they appear to be experiencing significant cost increases, and perhaps to determine whether those projects should continue to be approved.

Number 053

GEOFFREY PARKER, Attorney, testified via teleconference. He told the committee the bill aims to do two things: promote efficient transportation-planning expenditures by reducing waste on inefficient projects, and enhance the legislature's and public's ability to examine costs and benefits of new projects. He said AS 44.42.050 requires the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) to prepare an annual state transportation plan. The missing ingredient is a cost-benefit analysis of new transportation projects. He said the lack of a cost-benefit analysis deprives the legislature of the ability to compare the cost-effectiveness of a project and prevent waste. It diminishes the legislature's ability to fund effective projects and proper maintenance.

MR. PARKER offered that HB 473 would improve the situation by compelling an updated cost-benefit analysis whenever preliminary engineering and design costs rise dramatically. He called for requiring an updated cost-benefit analysis whenever a significant amount of time has elapsed without construction since the funds were first allocated to the project. He reasoned that a significant passage of time without construction might indicate other projects are more deserving. Mr. Parker gave several examples of projects that he felt had skyrocketing costs. He said [DOT&PF] proposes nearly a billion dollars of expenditures that it admits are not cost-effective. He referred to several documents containing examples, which he'd submitted to the committee in support of his testimony.

CHAIR KOHRING said he was surprised to see there are so many projects from which nothing tangible results.

Number 209

REPRESENTATIVE SCALZI asked Mr. Parker if he was totally opposed to some of the pioneer roads that would not have a positive cost-benefit ratio aside from the ones [Mr. Parker] had listed. He asked whether he had a "blanket no" approach, or if he was open-minded.

MR. PARKER said he was open-minded. Projects should be looked at on a project-by-project basis. He said he was focusing on the major projects that do not show benefits, not pioneer roads.

Number 226

REPRESENTATIVE KOOKESH asked Mr. Parker whom he was representing.

MR. PARKER said he was an attorney representing clients active in transportation issues in both Southcentral and Southwestern Alaska. His clients would prefer to remain anonymous.

REPRESENTATIVE KOOKESH said the trend of Mr. Parker's testimony was that he was advancing the bill in the name of the public good. Representative Kookesh expressed his thought that Mr. Parker was being paid to lobby an interest. He raised the issue of Mr. Parker's personal agenda.

MR. PARKER said he had no further thoughts on the matter.

Number 251

REPRESENTATIVE KOOKESH told the committee that since Mr. Parker would not divulge his clients, he would view Mr. Parker as having a conflict of interest in the matter.

CHAIR KOHRING told the committee he had no knowledge of Mr. Parker either.

Number 262

DEANNA ESSERT testified via teleconference. She told the committee that many projects experience cost overruns, and those costs can exceed the intended benefits of the projects. She expressed her thought that a cost-benefit analysis in the early engineering and design phases would save the state millions of dollars of federal money. She gave many examples of how transportation money is misspent on grandiose trails. Ms. Essert said the [Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan] (STIP) didn't use a cost-benefit analysis in its ranking. She said the Ship Creek Trail is another example of misspent funds. She stated that Mr. Parker's proposal, to require an updated cost-benefit analysis if construction has not occurred within three years of application, will help contain costs and steer funding toward more deserving projects.

CHAIR KOHRING asked Ms. Essert if she thought the bill would slow down the process of bringing roads to construction.

MS. ESSERT said she didn't think the bill would slow the process; it would speed the process, if anything.

Number 346

TIM BRIDGMAN, Construction Consultant, testified via teleconference. He gave his support to HB 473. He expressed concern about the tendency for certain projects to experience major cost overruns. He stated that HB 473 would curb these "runaway" projects. A project whose costs have exceeded its estimates by more than 50 percent indicates a gross miscalculation in need of review. Mr. Bridgman expanded on cost-benefit analysis. He drew a parallel between the Iliamna-Nondalton Road project and the Anchorage Coastal Trail. He asked the committee to answer the question, "At what point do we say enough is enough?"

Number 402

REPRESENTATIVE KOOKESH said it sounded as if Mr. Bridgman was averse to the "coastal zone program." He asked Mr. Bridgman if he had attended any Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) meetings.

MR. BRIDGMAN said he had been to most of the public hearings where there was discussion on the Anchorage Coastal Trail.

Number 417

MR. PARKER announced that he represented interests involved in both the Anchorage Coastal Trail and the Iliamna-Nondalton projects.

Number 445

RON CRENSHAW, Member, Citizen's Advisory Board, Trails and Recreational Access for Alaska (TRAAK), testified before the committee. He said he had been following the [Anchorage] Coastal Trail issue closely and recognized most of the testifiers in favor of HB 473 as strong opponents of the trail. He told the committee that most of the delays in the project have been a result of the machinations of a small and well-organized group who wouldn't like to see the trail completed.

Number 465

MIKE DOWNING, Director/Chief Engineer, Division of Statewide Design & Engineering Services, Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF), testified before the committee. He first asked if the testimony was on a [proposed] committee substitute (CS) or the original version.

Number 472

MIKE KRIEBER, Staff to Representative Vic Kohring, Alaska State Legislature, speaking as the committee aide, clarified that Mr. Parker's testimony had been on the original bill.

MR. DOWNING said as chief engineer at [DOT&PF] he spends a great deal of time making the department efficient. He offered his belief that HB 473 would not make DOT&PF or its process more efficient. He said he hadn't seen an instance in his tenure as chief engineer when someone said, "The solution to my concern is the elimination of a step." The solution is always to add a step, and this means it takes a long time to get through a process for all of the steps. Adding more steps to the process will delay work, however. Mr. Downing pointed out that in the logic of the bill, a cost increase of more than 50 percent will arrest development and execution of the project until it has been submitted to the legislature on an annual cycle. This could result in up to a year's delay.

Number 500

MR. DOWNING took issue with the language of the bill and how it groups preconstruction and planning together. He told the committee the two are different. As to why costs increase, he said 90 percent of DOT&PF's projects are "categorical exclusions" - projects that are environmentally benign. For the remaining projects, there are myriad public, environmental, state, federal, and local comments. Those comments rarely decrease the cost of the project; the scope and amenities are invariably added, not subtracted. The department must respond to public comments in a way that will keep costs down while still addressing public concerns.

MR. DOWNING shared the example of the Chena Hot Springs Road flood control project. He said the process that takes place before it goes into the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) is very involved, dynamic and detailed. He said although urban projects will often have a positive cost-benefit ratio, rural projects tend not to. He spoke to the issue of receiving \$5.20 for every dollar contributed in federal gas taxes. This is consistent with building and maintaining roads in rural areas where the cost-benefit ratio is less than one.

Number 575

CHAIR KOHRING said the thrust of the bill is to make the legislature more involved in the process. He said he couldn't see why the department was so averse to such a simplistic bill.

Number 584

REPRESENTATIVE KOOKESH said he didn't think it was that simple. He suggested that if people are against the Anchorage Coastal Trail, then they should stop it, but not by legislation. If this bill were around when the Alaska Marine Highway was built, there would be no ferry system. To say the bill is simple oversight is wrong; rather, it is the way to stop a particular project in Anchorage. He said that is not the way to do business in Alaska. Representative Kookesh stated that it would hurt rural Alaska, and said he would not accept its being called a "simple" issue of helping the legislature.

TAPE 02-4, SIDE B
Number 593

REPRESENTATIVE JOE GREEN, Alaska State Legislature, sponsor of HB 473, pointed out that nothing in the bill mandates a positive cost-benefit ratio. It just says that when an estimate is off by more than 50 percent, the legislature should have a say on whether to go forward on the project. He said the bill would ask what the honest estimate is, and then would ask why it is varying.

REPRESENTATIVE KOOKESH read from [sub-subparagraph] (f) [of an unidentified proposed CS]:

Transportation projects that have a benefit-to-cost ratio greater than one are presumed efficient and projects that have a benefit-to-cost ratio of less than one are presumed inefficient. Inefficient transportation projects cannot be submitted.

MR. KRIEBER clarified that Representative Kookesh was reading from a draft proposed CS that had not been introduced to the committee yet. He said it was provided to members to look at for a potential future meeting. The bill being testified on was the one in members' packets [the original bill].

Number 568

MR. DOWNING returned to Chair Kohring's earlier question. He said the opportunity for the legislature to have input on the

costs of a project is when the appropriation for construction is submitted to [the legislature] in the capital budget. The time it takes to go through the environmental-document phase, the right-of-way acquisition phase, and the design phase is long enough that the department submits the capital budget request early on. Later the department submits [requests for] the construction-appropriation monies. That is the other opportunity for the legislature to provide input on the matter.

MR. DOWNING stated that if the department does a reconnaissance project or a plan, it simply spends the money. If the department embarks on an environmental document and decides not to build, then there is no reimbursement required. If it is decided to build, the department is "on the hook" to reimburse the Federal Highway Administration if construction doesn't proceed within a ten-year period. He said [the bill] could trigger such an event. He said the construction appropriation is the point at which the legislature should take a second look at a project.

Number 540

The committee took an at ease from 2:10 p.m. until 2:12 p.m.

Number 537

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER told the committee she had some concerns about the bill. It would adversely affect some projects in her district such as Aleknagik Bridge; the project has been going on for ten years, and it has been not an issue of cost, but rather a dispute over where the bridge should be built. Under HB 473, after four years the project would have to be reviewed by the legislature. She said the bill would use up legislators' time and political capital, and it would be especially damaging for rural legislators to have to fight for projects every four years.

Number 520

REPRESENTATIVE SCALZI, in reference to Representative Kookesh's earlier concern, pointed out provisions [in the draft proposed CS that wasn't before the committee] regarding instances of "inefficient transportation" projects. He said the governor may not submit inefficient transportation projects "unless the bill is accompanied by written analysis in cost-benefits of a project and detailed justification of the project." It sets a separate category for roads that don't meet the criteria.

REPRESENTATIVE SCALZI asked Representative Kapsner if the new funding category in HB 502 helped satisfied her concerns about rural roads in her district. He said he had three projects in his own district that would "never make it on" under HB 473.

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER said she didn't have many roads in her district.

Number 505

CHAIR KOHRING said it didn't appear that the bill had enough support to be moved. He announced that the bill would be held over for further discussion.

HB 502-RUSTIC ROADS AND HIGHWAYS

[Contains discussion relating to HB 473]

CHAIR KOHRING announced the next matter before the committee, HOUSE BILL NO. 502, "An Act relating to the designation of and funding for rustic roads and highways; and providing for an effective date."

Number 490

MIKE KRIEBER, Staff to Representative Vic Kohring, Alaska State Legislature, presented HB 502 on behalf of the House Transportation Standing Committee, sponsor. He told the committee the Department of Transportation [& Public Facilities (DOT&PF)] provides funding for four basic categories of roads including the National Highway System, the State Highway System, the TRAAK [Trails and Recreational Access for Alaska] program, and the Community Transportation Program. Under the TRAAK program, not much is associated with road construction; it is primarily for trail development and enhancement purposes.

MR. KRIEBER referred members to a listing of three projects that are dirt roads with very low usage - under 200 cars per day. The STIP [Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan] process would give a minimum of \$40 million to pave the roads. He offered that the paving of these roads would give a very low cost-benefit ratio in those projects. He contrasted the Old Glenn Highway with the roads to be paved. He characterized the road as "falling apart" and "very dangerous," and added that the road base is starting to degrade. There is no money appropriated for this 7,000-car-per-day road. He said there is

inappropriate prioritization of some of the other roads in the same funding category. The bill proposes that DOT&PF not be allowed to pave these rustic roads, in order to free up funding and to prioritize other roads in the state.

Number 461

MR. KRIEBER said another purpose of the bill is to create economic development by allowing DOT&PF to use TRAAK funds to build rustic roads, so long as they aren't paved. These roads would be access roads into mineral-rich areas of rural Alaska. They could also be used by the public for recreational access. Mr. Kriebler told the committee that under the bill, 50 percent of TRAAK funds could be used for the new rustic roads category.

Number 442

REPRESENTATIVE SCALZI asked if the standards for some roads are too high and would make it economically infeasible.

MR. KRIEBER expressed his opinion that DOT&PF could establish the design standards for this road category.

REPRESENTATIVE SCALZI asked if there would be summer or seasonal roads within [the rustic road] category. He asked if the bill would obligate a year-round road.

MR. KRIEBER answered that the Denali Highway and Hatcher Pass Road are seasonal roads that would fall into the category.

Number 431

REPRESENTATIVE SCALZI inquired about incorporating HB 473 with HB 502.

MR. KRIEBER characterized that as an idea worth exploring further.

Number 420

ARTHUR (MARTY) QUAAS, President, South Knik River Community Council, testified via teleconference. He expressed his wish to see the Old Glenn Highway upgraded because of its poor condition. He said he represents people who live in Alaska all year. He expressed his thought that the highway will become a gravel road in the coming few years [because of its disrepair].

Mr. Quaas told of many accidents that were the result of the road's potholes and poor condition.

Number 396

REPRESENTATIVE OGAN asked Mr. Quaas if he would support taking the money that was allocated in the STIP to the Denali Highway and Hatcher Pass Road and reallocating it to the Old Glenn Highway project.

MR. QUAAS told the committee the residents in the Denali Highway, Hatcher Pass, and Petersville Road areas would rather the roads were not upgraded.

Number 386

CHAIR KOHRING added that one primary reason behind the bill was frustration with the process that has resulted in funding for projects that don't have a high priority when there are other roads in serious condition, like the Old Glenn Highway.

Number 377

LARRY DeVILBISS, School Board Member, Matanuska-Susitna Borough, testified via teleconference. He gave his support to the bill. He characterized the situation on the Old Glenn Highway as a "serious health and safety problem." He said the borough had been told nothing was being done to remedy the disrepair on the highway because of high maintenance expenses.

Number 347

JOHN SHANDELMEIER, Meier's Lake Road House, testified via teleconference. He gave his support to the bill. He qualified it as good because it would free up funding for high-traffic roads, and because [the Denali Highway] is a destination highway instead of a travel corridor. It doesn't make sense to spend large amounts of money to make it a travel corridor when the primary use is small-group tourism and access to hunting. He said high-speed travel would conflict with many present uses of the area. He cited a survey four years prior that indicated 85-percent opposition to paving the Denali Highway.

Number 309

PAUL BOOS testified via teleconference. He gave his support to leaving the Denali Highway unpaved, but said he'd like to see

the bill clarify what "unpaved means." He made it clear that chip-sealing the highway is not something he would want. He also expressed concern about using TRAAK money to fund roads to mining activities, and spoke against it. He said he would like to see the sunset clause either extended or removed altogether.

Number 284

RUTH McHENRY testified via teleconference, asking that the legislature leave something for the enjoyment of "plain old Alaskans." She said the Denali Highway doesn't cost much to maintain, and that it isn't a bad thing to give an Alaskan a job operating a road grader. Federal funds used for more extensive projects are occasionally warranted by means of a program called "preventive maintenance." Ms. McHenry offered that preventive-maintenance money can be used on either paved or unpaved sections of road; she mentioned a letter she had to prove it.

MS. McHENRY expressed confusion about how TRAAK funds would apply to the maintenance of unpaved roads, since she thought those monies apply only to capital programs. Leaving the Denali Highway unpaved would free up over \$40 million for other projects. She offered that "rustic road" needs a definition. She told the committee she would like that definition to state that rustic roads are "roads that are special to Alaskans for qualities that would be compromised by paving." Mixing such roads with those not yet constructed might not work well. She said new roads would require capital funds, jeopardizing the whole rustic roads approach. If a mining company wants a road to its prospect in the Kuskokwim area, for example, it should build it itself so the cost to the state doesn't exceed possible revenue gained from a mine. She urged the committee to keep the bill simple so it would have the best chance of passage.

Number 230

PATRICK FITZGERALD testified via teleconference. He expressed his wish to keep the Denali Highway unpaved and not chip-sealed. He told the committee the nature of the highway [in its present condition] lends itself to great recreation opportunities.

Number 195

ROBIN DALE FORD testified via teleconference. She expressed support for HB 502, but said she had some questions about provisions for new rustic roads, especially for mineral

development. She said she would like to see the rustic roads remain as they are.

Number 175

CHUCK KAUCIC testified via teleconference. A scout leader and father of six, he told the committee he didn't support the bill because of its funding formula. The TRAAK program was to provide recreation-trail access to outdoor recreation. Mr. Kaucic said someone is stretching the definition of "trails." He stated that the "original legislation that [he] was involved with stated clearly that 'roads are roads, and trails are trails.'" He described the funding formula as "robbing the poor to satisfy the rich." He said Alaska should "leave TRAAK alone" and "not take away the funding for roads." He suggested several sources of information for the committee to take a closer look at.

Number 111

MYRON WRIGHT testified via teleconference, noting that his livelihood is derived from photographing wild areas. The Denali Highway is a prime example of such an area, and shouldn't be changed or improved; rather, it should be maintained. If it is paved, tour buses and utility lines will come in, and that will change it. Mr. Wright said not developing the area is an economic benefit for him.

Number 085

MARY BETHE WRIGHT testified via teleconference. She expressed her wish to see the rustic roads remain as they are for people to enjoy them. Improvements and paving bring things that are unimagined, and paving changes the character of a road. She expressed that perhaps "TRAAK funds should not be used."

Number 064

DENNIS WESTON testified via teleconference. He stated his belief that the Denali Highway should be left as it is. He said he has an operation called Camp Wilderness, and he wants it kept that way. He said he was also opposed to repealing the sunset clause.

CHAIR KOHRING said the intent of the bill is to look at different projects and make prudent priorities for improvements.

He recognized that many people want to preserve the natural beauty and serenity, however.

Number 030

JOHN BRANT testified via teleconference. He said the Denali Highway should be left unpaved, and added that he supports HB 502. He said the highway has a unique cultural heritage that paving will destroy; it would create a high-speed corridor between Paxson and Cantwell, would create a more sterile wildlife environment, and would result in roadside litter. By contrast, the pristine Denali Highway has offered travelers a rewarding experience that future generations have a right to share.

Number 009

WARREN OLSON testified via teleconference. He said many people consider the Denali Highway the "breadbasket of Alaska." He said the money for paving should be used somewhere else. [A small portion of Mr. Olson's testimony was lost because of the tape change.]

TAPE 02-5, SIDE A

Number 005

JIM STERLING testified via teleconference. He said he and his wife support HB 502, but were wondering about the sunset clause; he said he thought it should be excluded.

Number 022

RON CRENSHAW, Member, TRAAK Citizen's Advisory Board, testified before the committee. He said the TRAAK program was established in 1996 to force dialogue between agencies that hadn't existed before, and to provide funding where there was none previously. He said the program has brought cohesion between state and federal agencies, and it has given benefits to all communities in the state. He gave examples of TRAAK projects and the good they bring to their different communities.

Number 131

THOMAS B. BRIGHAM, Director, Division of Statewide Planning, Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, testified before the committee. He said the department believes the bill could be simplified and made more direct. He said he understood

that the bill aims to promote specific roads that are higher-volume than some seen in the program - roads like the Old Glenn Highway. The department would be open to certain projects' being moved up in the program. Mr. Brigham spoke of a so-called GARVEE [Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicles] package [for bonding] that was in the Senate Finance Committee.

MR. BRIGHAM said another objective of the bill is to prevent certain roads from being paved. Paving saves money, but the department has heard testimony, loud and clear, on keeping the Denali Highway unpaved. He said the department wasn't trying to move the project ahead aggressively; rather, it is on the "back burner."

Number 180

CHAIR KOHRING interjected that he'd heard that the Hatcher Pass Road, Copper River Highway, and Denali Highway were slated to be paved by DOT&PF. He said the concern was that those projects are moving forth ahead of the Old Glenn Highway and other needed projects in the area.

MR. BRIGHAM said the department is happy to entertain discussions about priority of projects.

Number 189

REPRESENTATIVE OGAN said he has seen project funding used as leverage on legislators to get things moved through committees. He expressed his encouragement at seeing that the Denali Highway is being taken off the list for paving when there are other roads in serious need of paving.

Number 217

REPRESENTATIVE SCALZI asked if Mr. Krieber would look into combining HB 473 and HB 502. [HB 502 was held over.]

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 3:05 p.m.