

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**HOUSE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 30, 2004

1:45 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Jim Holm, Chair  
Representative Beverly Masek  
Representative Vic Kohring  
Representative Dan Ogg  
Representative Nick Stepovich  
Representative Mary Kapsner  
Representative Albert Kookesh

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 327(STA)

"An Act relating to pedestrians using rollerblades, roller skates, and rollerskis."

- MOVED CSSB 327(STA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 327

SHORT TITLE: ROLLERBLADES, ROLLER SKATES, ROLLER SKIS

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) SEEKINS

02/13/04	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/13/04	(S)	STA, FIN
02/26/04	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 211
02/26/04	(S)	Moved CSSB 327(STA) Out of Committee
02/26/04	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
02/27/04	(S)	STA RPT 3DP 1NR NEW TITLE
02/27/04	(S)	DP: STEVENS G, COWDERY, STEDMAN;
02/27/04	(S)	NR: HOFFMAN
03/17/04	(S)	FIN REFERRAL WAIVED
03/19/04	(S)	TRANSMITTED TO (H)
03/19/04	(S)	VERSION: CSSB 327(STA)
03/22/04	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/22/04	(H)	TRA, STA
03/30/04	(H)	TRA AT 1:30 PM CAPITOL 17

**WITNESS REGISTER**

SENATOR RALPH SEEKINS  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska  
POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SB 327.

ALLEN STOREY, Lieutenant  
Central Office  
Division of Alaska State Troopers  
Department of Public Safety (DPS)  
Juneau, Alaska  
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 327.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

**TAPE 04-11, SIDE A**  
Number 0001

**CHAIR JIM HOLM** called the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:45 p.m. Representatives Holm, Masek, Stepovich, Kohring, Kapsner, and Kookesh were present at the call to order. Representative Ogg arrived as the meeting was in progress.

SB 327-ROLLERBLADES, ROLLER SKATES, ROLLER SKIS

CHAIR HOLM announced that the only order of business would be CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 327(STA), "An Act relating to pedestrians using rollerblades, roller skates, and rollerskis."

Number 0071

SENATOR RALPH SEEKINS, Alaska State Legislature, sponsor of SB 327, paraphrased from the following written sponsor statement [original punctuation provided]:

For many years roller-skiers' legal use of public roadways was, more or less, taken for granted. This assumption was successfully challenged in the Fairbanks area last fall. Senate Bill 327 seeks to remedy this situation by specifically allowing the use of particular wheeled devices on those public roadways also available to bicyclists. It also recommends a set of safety standards for the use of these devices.

Alaska is home to some of the best international, national, collegiate, and junior cross-country skiers on the planet. In fact, seven of the ten Alaskans competing in the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City were cross-country skiers. Imagine that. Seven Olympic cross-country skiers from such a small state as ours! This speaks volumes not only about our skiers' work ethic but also their training opportunities.

The natural preference of many of these world-class athletes would, no doubt, have Alaska covered in snow year-round. Since this is not a reasonable near-term possibility, the use of wheeled skis to imitate snow skiing has grown to become an effective training tool for use during non-winter months. What's more, Alaska is becoming well known nationally and internationally as a favored summer-time training site.

For these reasons, it is the intent of the proposed legislation to accommodate this seasonal use of some of our roadways. In fact, other northern locales - such as Norway, Sweden and Canada - have, for many years, supported the efforts of their cross-country athletes with similar provisions. Furthermore, the proposed legislation borrows heavily from Cross Country Canada's policy respecting the use of roller-skis on public roads.

Senate Bill 327 seeks to accommodate this important training activity by utilizing safe and reasonable methods for sharing roadway surfaces with motorized vehicles. It has garnered a groundswell of support throughout the cross-country community ranging from Alaska's Interior region to Southcentral to the Kenai Peninsula.

The 2006 Winter Olympic games are just around the corner. Would it be too much to expect seven (or more) of our cross-country skiers to make the trip to Torin, Italy? Of course not! In fact, a little courtesy and common sense combined with a small statutory revision can help make it happen.

Number 0374

CHAIR HOLM asked if the sponsor intended for the roller[skiing] to occur only in the summer.

SENATOR SEEKINS replied yes. He pointed out that SB 327 authorizes the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to promulgate regulations to help eliminate conflicts where possible. In response to Representative Masek, Senator Seekins explained that rollerskis have the same binding as a cross-country ski with a wheel in the front and the back [of the ski]. The same motions can be used for roller skiing as cross-country skiing, and therefore the same muscles are being trained year round. He reviewed some of the regulations specified in SB 327, which he characterized as common sense.

Number 0531

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER noted that rollerskis would be allowed on bike paths. She asked if rollerskis would be allowed on the side of the road.

SENATOR SEEKINS explained that rollerskis only work on hard-packed surfaces.

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER informed the committee that there aren't any bike paths in Bethel, and therefore she was trying to envision someone going down a very narrow, bumpy paved road.

SENATOR SEEKINS said that he believes the rollerskis could be used successfully on such a surface.

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER opined that it seems like a hazard if there aren't bike paths for roller skiers to use.

SENATOR SEEKINS acknowledged that bike paths can eliminate some of the hazards, but he said that roller skiers pose the same hazard as bicyclists.

Number 0620

REPRESENTATIVE OGG turned to the last clause of the legislation, which read: "stay to the far right and restrict movements when being passed by a motor vehicle." He questioned the enforceability of that, and questioned whether it may be a bit ambiguous.

SENATOR SEEKINS agreed that it may be a bit ambiguous, which is why he is thinking of including language regarding the

department promulgating regulations. He reiterated his desire for folks to use common sense.

REPRESENTATIVE STEPOVICH noted that the language in driving manuals is "show caution."

Number 0753

ALLEN STOREY, Lieutenant, Central Office, Division of Alaska State Troopers, Department of Public Safety (DPS), said that the department stands ready to work with the sponsor should this legislation become law. He related support for the state's athletes. Lieutenant Storey expressed concern with regard to the age and the experience level of some of the individuals involved in these activities, and the space necessary to perform these activities. He said he wants to ensure that the traffic is safe and that drivers don't overreact when encountering pedestrians using rollerblades, roller skates, and rollerskis. If there is a group interested in these activities, he expressed interest in hearing from them regarding how to address the aforementioned issues.

Number 0915

REPRESENTATIVE MASEK moved to report CSSB 327(STA) out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, it was so ordered.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.