

**LASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 5, 2008

1:09 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Albert Kookesh, Chair  
Senator John Cowdery, Vice Chair, via teleconference  
Senator Donald Olson  
Senator Bill Wielechowski  
Senator Gary Wilken

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

SENATE BILL NO. 218

"An Act relating to use of child safety seats and seat belts."

MOVED SB 218 OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL NO. 236

"An Act establishing the Alaska transportation fund and relating to the fund; and providing for an effective date."

MOVED SB 236 OUT OF COMMITTEE

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 218

SHORT TITLE: CHILD SAFETY SEATS & SEAT BELTS

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) FRENCH

01/16/08	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 01/11/08
01/16/08	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/16/08	(S)	TRA, STA
01/29/08	(S)	TRA AT 1:00 PM BUTROVICH 205
01/29/08	(S)	TRANSPORTATION FUND
02/05/08	(H)	TRA AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 17

BILL: SB 236

SHORT TITLE: TRANSPORTATION FUND

SPONSOR(S): RULES BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

01/18/08	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/18/08	(S)	TRA, FIN

01/29/08 (S) TRA AT 1:00 PM BUTROVICH 205  
02/05/08 (H) TRA AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 17

**WITNESS REGISTER**

ALLISON BIASTOCK, Staff  
Senator French  
Alaska State Capital  
Juneau, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented an overview of SB 218.

RODNEY DIAL, Lieutenant  
Department of Public Safety  
Ketchikan, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 218.

CINDY CASHEN, Administrator  
Division Of Program Development  
Highway Safety Office  
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF)  
Juneau, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions on SB 218.

GORDON GLASER  
Injury Prevention of Children and Emergency Medical Services  
Division of Public Health  
Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)  
Anchorage, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions on SB 218.

NANCY SLAGLE, Director  
Division of Administrative Services  
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF)  
Juneau, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions on SB 218 and SB 236.

BRENDA KNAPP, Health Program Manager  
Division of Public Health  
Injury Prevention and Emergency Medical Services  
Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)  
Juneau, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 218.

JOHN COOK, Legislative Director  
Alaska Automobile Dealers Association  
Anchorage, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 218.

JANE FELLMAN, RN and Coordinator  
Kenai Peninsula Safe Kids Coalition  
Central Peninsula Hospital  
Kenai, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 218.

JANICE TOWER, Executive Director  
Alaska Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics  
Anchorage, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 218.

PEGGY HAYASHI, RN and Chair  
Child Passenger Safety Partnership Committee  
Anchorage, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 218.

FRANK RICHARDS, Deputy Commissioner  
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF)  
Juneau, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented overview of SB 236.

AVES THOMPSON, Executive Director  
Alaska Trucking Association (ATA)  
Anchorage, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 236.

CINDY BETTINE, Member  
MatSu Borough Assembly  
Wasilla, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 236.

MARIAN ROMANO, Borough Manger  
MatSu Borough  
Palmer, AK

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 236.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

**CHAIR ALBERT KOOKESH** called the Senate Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at [1:06:01 PM](#). Present at the call to order were Senators Wielechowski, Wilken, Olson, Kookesh and Cowdery via teleconference.

#### **SB 218-CHILD SAFETY SEATS & SEAT BELTS**

CHAIR KOOKESH announced the consideration of SB 218.

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ALLISON BIASTOCK, Staff, Senator French, sponsor of SB 218, presented an overview. She had on display two booster seats, a backless model and a full back model.

MS. BIASTOCK said that when children use adult seat belts in place of a proper child safety device, injuries can occur. While any restraint is better than no restraint, the use of proper child safety seats and booster seats can prevent injuries. Current Alaska law states that children under four must be secured in a safety device meeting US Department of Transportation (USDOT) standards. SB 218 places the U.S. DOT guidelines into statute. A color chart in the bill packet explains which child belongs in what device.

MS. BIASTOCK said a major change in statute would be the requirement those children ages four to eight who do not meet height and weight requirements need to use a seat belt-secured booster seat or approved child-passenger restraint. Booster seats are in essence big kid car seats. In most cases when children outgrow their child seat, they are too small for an adult seat belt. The American Academy of Pediatrics states that booster seats are 60 percent safer than seat belts alone. There are 38 states that currently mandate booster seats. Both the seats on display would put a driver into compliance with the language in SB 218. The backless model sells for \$14 to \$25, and the fullback model costs \$40. Both models cost less than a tank of gas for most vehicles. The committee substitute (CS) clarifies the age at which a child would use a booster seat. The original bill might have a 15 year old who is small for his or her age required by law to use a booster seat. This is the reason for wording in the CS making it mandatory for booster seats for kids four to eight who do not meet height and weight requirements. If a child is over eight it's up to the parent or guardian. This bill would also help law enforcement officers to ask a child's age rather than trying to guess their height and weight.

SENATOR COWDERY asked if there is confusion with the present law.

MS. BIASTOCK said the present law is written in vague terms.

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CHAIR KOOKESH called an at ease.

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SENATOR WILKEN joined the meeting.

RODNEY DIAL, Lieutenant, Department of Public Safety, Ketchikan, AK, said that some law enforcement officers and most parents do not know which children should be in booster seats. The Department of Public Safety supports SB 218; it makes it as clear as possible regarding appropriate restraints.

SENATOR OLSON asked if the confusion is widespread.

MR. DIAL said it is widespread.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked what the difference is between current law and the new proposal.

MS. BIASTOCK said current law states that a child under the age of 16 shall be properly secured in a child safety device and if the child is less than four years of age, the child shall be properly secured in a safety device meeting the standards of USDOT. This bill places the guidelines from the USDOT into Alaska statute. However old a child is or whatever size they are, they can be plugged into the chart to find out what type of seat they should be in. For example, an infant who is under a year old or 20 pounds should be in a rear-facing car seat. That's not currently spelled out in statute but it would be with this bill.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if parents are currently required to adhere to SB 218.

MS. BIASTOCK said it's been difficult to enforce because it's not clear.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if there would be a fiscal gain if this bill is passed

MS. BIASTOCK said she understands there would be.

SENATOR OLSON asked what happens when a driver has a pickup truck without seat belts.

MS. BIASTOCK said there is a list of exemptions and one of them is a vehicle that is not equipped with seat belts. Older vehicles without seat belts would not be able to accommodate a

child safety device. Therefore, a cab without a back seat would be compliant. This is already in statute.

SENATOR OLSON asked if there are exemptions for rural areas or non-federally funded highway areas.

MS. BIASTOCK said there are no current exemptions for rural areas. This bill does not apply to vehicles that are not designed to be on a highway like ATVs and snow machines.

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SENATOR OLSON asked if people in villages who don't have roads, but who drive up and down the beach at low tide or across the airport, would be in violation of this law.

MS BIASTOCK said yes, they would be in violation.

1:19:10 PM

CINDY CASHEN, Administrator, Division Of Program Development, Highway Safety Office, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF), Juneau, AK, said her office is responsible for administering federal transportation dollars to programs that save lives and prevent injuries on roads. There are federal funds designated as child safety and booster seat incentive grants. These grants are for states that enforce a law requiring any child too large to be secured in a child safety seat in a passenger vehicle be secured in a child restraint that meets the requirement prescribed under section three of Anton's Law. To qualify for a grant a state child restraint law should not leave any gaps in coverage for children under eight years old. The current Alaska law requires the use of proper safety devices for children under the age of 16 as approved by the USDOT, but does not designate which safety device must be used based on the child's age, height, and weight. The federal government has determined that if states want these funds, they must have the law specify age, height and weight. The USDOT's chief counsel has determined that Alaska would be eligible to receive new federal funds with the passage of this bill. Alaska could apply for an estimated \$194,000 in federal fiscal year 2008 and another \$194,000 in 2009. Up to 50 percent of those funds may be used to fund programs for purchasing and distributing child safety seats and restraints to low-income families. The remaining 50 percent would be used for enforcement, education and training of child safety professionals, police officers, fire and emergency medical personnel, educators and parents concerning all aspects of child safety seats and restraints as

well as educating the public concerning the proper use and installation.

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SENATOR COWDERY asked how a person with a sports car without a back seat can comply.

MS. CASHEN said SB 218 spells out what type of a restraint device a child needs. If there's no back seat the child should not be in the vehicle.

GORDON GLASER, Injury Prevention and Emergency Medical Services, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), Anchorage, AK, explained that there is an on/off switch in most cars to turn off the air bag, which allows a child to be seated in front. The safety device is assigned to the back seat until the child reaches the age of 13. If there's no back seat, the child can be put in the front seat.

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SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if the \$194,000 would be placed in the budget and used for the purposes Ms. Cashen described.

MS. CASHEN said those funds would stay within her office and be used for the types of programs mentioned.

SENATOR COWDERY asked if the funds go directly to her office or to the legislature.

NANCY SLAGLE, Director, Division of Administrative Services, DOTPF, Juneau, AK, said the legislature would appropriate the funds to the department.

SENATOR COWDERY asked if the funds would be earmarked for her department.

MS. SLAGLE said the funds would be provided to DOTPF for it to determine where the funds would go, either through grant awards to local nonprofits or, for example, to the troopers for enforcement.

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SENATOR OLSON said there are some cars that don't have an on/off switch. He asked if he's in violation if he takes his infant son in a car that does not have the switch.

MR. GLASER said if the car does not have a passenger side air bag, he would not be in violation.

SENATOR OLSON said the car was retrofitted with an airbag.

MR. GLASER said that if it's been retrofitted, it should have an on/off switch.

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BRENDA KNAPP, Health Program Manager, Injury Prevention and Emergency Medical Services, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Social Services, Juneau, AK, said DHSS supports SB 218. The bill amends current statute to set specific standards for the use of child passenger restraints.

She said motor vehicle related injuries are the leading cause of death in the U.S. of children between the ages of 2-14, and one of the leading causes of hospitalizations of Alaskan children. Children who are restrained in booster seats are 59 percent less likely to be injured than children restrained by a lap belt only. Nationally, voluntary seat belt inspection stations report that 80-85 percent of children are improperly restrained, and one-third of children under age 14 use the wrong type of restraint.

MS KNAPP said the current statute references child safety devices but does not state specific standards for age and weight-based restraints. This bill is designed to eliminate confusion about which restraints are appropriate for each age and weight level. It clarifies the types of passenger restraints required for children of various ages and sizes to prevent and minimize vehicular injuries.

She said 42 states have passed booster seat legislation qualifying them for USDOT highway safety grants. While this bill has no fiscal impact on DHSS, passing it would make Alaska eligible for approximately \$200,000 in additional federal incentive funds for education and enforcement.

SENATOR COWDERY asked if the bill addresses older vehicles with single seats and without airbags. For example, he asked, what if a family's only means of transportation is a dump truck.

MR. GLASER replied that the bill addresses older cars. Most people don't add airbags to older vehicles that came without them. Regarding trucks with only two seat belts, only two people can ride in these seats. It is a problem for a family with a

dump truck. Children need to be restrained and it is a problem when there are more children in a family than there is accommodation for them in the family vehicle. That is beyond the purview of this bill. The intention of this bill is to make the present law clear to law enforcement officers and parents. If the vehicle did not come with seat belts, there's no requirement to put seat belts in or to use a car seat.

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SENATOR OLSON asked if he would be in violation if he takes his child in heavy equipment like a loader or a forklift. He asked if the bill addresses passenger vehicles only.

MR. GLASER said this bill would not affect industrial vehicles.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI said this bill doesn't really change current law. It just codifies the regulations and gives the state almost \$200,000 to do that.

MS. KNAPP said the existing statute references the standards. This would bring those standards into law so that they're usable.

JOHN COOK, Legislative Director, Alaska Automobile Dealers Association, Anchorage, AK, said the association has passed a resolution that supports SB 218. The bill clarifies the law and helps eliminate confusion. He personally attested to the confusion when professionals test the correct installation of booster seats. The bill helps bring state regulations in line with what manufacturers recommend for children. He pointed out that in the manufacturer's manual, it specifically states that seat belts are not intended to secure young children. Manufacturers provide provisions for attaching booster seats and infant seats in extended and regular cabs of trucks. Every vehicle that's been manufactured in the past eight years has an on/off switch for air bags or a sensor that automatically disables the airbag if the latch system is being used.

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JANE FELLMAN, RN, Central Peninsula Hospital and Coordinator, Kenai Peninsula Safe Kids Coalition, Kenai, AK, said that on a day-to-day basis she facilitates child passenger safety by checking car seats and conducting educational programs. She said the clarification provided by the bill is very much needed. In 2003 the coalition did some research and found that Alaska had a good law but the problem was enforcement. She frequently has people calling her asking what the law is regarding children

over four, if they have to be in booster seats. However, just knowing that has not been sufficient. The coalition has done trainings for law enforcement. Questions that have come up are: how do you get a child into a booster seat; who should be in one; what are the height, weight and proper fit requirements. She told the story of visiting a kindergarten of about 20 five and six-year-old children who weigh 45-50 pounds. She asked how many were in booster seats and three raised their hand. Most of the children were being secured only by seat belts and were in major danger of being ejected if there was a crash. The coalition distributed 260 car seats and 116 booster seats. For over 50 percent of the seats distributed, children who received them were formerly being secured by seat belts. As an emergency room nurse she has seen the effects of not being properly restrained. A seat belt going across a child's abdomen can cause all kinds of injuries. In national surveys of who is in compliance with safety regulations for children, Alaska always fails because it is not recognized as having booster seat legislation. She strongly supports SB 218.

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JANICE TOWER, Executive Director, Alaska Chapter of American Academy Of Pediatrics, Anchorage, AK, said her chapter supports SB 218. Children should stay in a booster seat until an adult seat belt fits correctly, usually when a child reaches four feet nine inches in height, and is eight to twelve years of age. Results from a 2007 national survey on the use of booster seats conducted by the National Center of Statistics and Analysis for the National Highway Safety Administration revealed that booster seat use rates for children ages six and seven dropped 36 percent in 2006 to 25 percent in 2007. The study concluded that there was a premature graduation of children from birth to age twelve to restraint types that are inappropriate for their height and weight. She said SB 218 would help eliminate some of the confusion. It would help parents and care givers identify which safety devices are appropriate for their children. Many pediatricians are happy to participate in education, counseling parents during doctor visits on how to keep children safe in vehicles.

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MR. GLASER said the Division of Public Health has been conducting child passenger safety checks for people from Ketchikan to the North Pole who have voluntarily come in to have their car seats checked. In all the places they have gone, parents that have come in have not had their children placed correctly in car seats. Specifically, children over 40 pounds

have not been in booster seats. In the data that comes from the Alaska Trauma Registry over a four year period of four to eight year olds, 39 were injured needing hospitalization. None of the 39 was in a booster seat or child restraint.

PEGGY HAYASHI, RN and Chair, Child Passenger Safety Partnership Committee, Anchorage, AK, said the committee is composed of instructors and technicians who look at data submitted to the Alaska Injury Prevention Center on a quarterly basis. This data provides insight into what is happening to children traveling in motor vehicles across the state. She has frequently sat with parents in emergency rooms who have told her that they did not understand the law. This bill is a clarification of current law, which was written in 1985. Clarification has been the missing component. She supports SB 218.

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CHAIR KOOKESH closed public testimony and asked for a motion.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI moved SB 218 from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s). There being no objection, the motion carried.

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CHAIR KOOKESH called an at ease to sign the bill.

### **SB 236-TRANSPORTATION FUND**

[1:56:08 PM](#)

CHAIR KOOKESH announced consideration of SB 236.

FRANK RICHARDS, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF), Juneau, AK, said he would describe Alaska's transportation system and how the state is constrained in addressing its aging assets. He said he would describe what other states are doing on their highways and roads, and present Governor Palin's approach to meeting Alaska's transportation needs with an Alaska Transportation Fund.

MR. RICAHRDS said the existing infrastructure across Alaska presents safety concerns across the board from fatal accidents to seasonal closures of airports. This significantly impacts the flow of goods and people. There is congestion in larger communities affecting everything from commuters to the movement of freight and school busses. The state's assets are deteriorating because of limited funding. He displayed photos of highway pavement to demonstrate its poor condition. He estimated

the backlog of pavement that has reached the end of its useful life is approaching \$300 million on the national highway routes. This is 2,100 miles of highway that include the Glen Highway, the Parks Highway, the Richardson Highway, the Sterling Highway, the Alaska Highway and the Dalton Highway. The pavement deterioration on these highways alone is growing at a rate of \$80 million a year. Other routes like the Alaska Highway System and the Community Transportation Program which include locally owned roads present an additional need. He estimates that for every dollar of timely pavement lifecycle investment, \$4 of extensive repair costs can be saved. It will be difficult to put into place with such a large backlog of nearly failed pavement.

MR. RICHARDS said there are also needed bridge repairs although progress is being made. Work on Washington Creek Bridge is almost completed as well as on several Parks Highway bridges, the Hicks Creek Bridge, the Kenai River Bridge in Soldatna, the South Channel Bridge in Unalaska, and the Tanana River Bridge on the Alaska Highway. Bridges in Hyder and Gustavus are scheduled projects this year if the necessary environmental permits can be obtained. About 10 percent of the bridges need seismic retrofits. To date DOTPF has spent almost \$20 million doing the work in Phase 1. Phase 2 will be much more expensive. Only one or two projects can be done per year.

He said transportation assets are also being impacted by changing climatic conditions including heavy precipitation, greater frequency of strong storms, warmer summers and extended seasons that increase the number of freeze/thaw cycles.

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CHAIR KOOKESH asked him to address the bill with respect to the endowment

MR. RICHARDS said the governor has proposed two installments into an endowment fund, \$500 million in fiscal 2008 and \$500 million in fiscal 2009, to create a corpus of about \$1 billion. That fund would be invested through the Department of Revenue and the interest earned would then be used to fund transportation needs across the state and address all modal issues, from ports and harbors to airports and highways. It would be a fund source the legislature would appropriate to cover specific projects that DOTPF would nominate through the capital budget process.

CHAIR KOOKESH asked if the committee was being asked to adopt a fiscal note. He said he was confused by all the zeros.

MR.RICHARDS referred the question to the administration services director, Nancy Slagle.

2:02:31 PM

NANCY SLAGLE, Director, Administrative Services, DOTPF, Juneau, AK, said she would expect an appropriation specifically for the \$500 million to capitalize the fund. This bill creates the fund. The zero fiscal note is basically saying that DOTPF will administer the program by identifying projects within the organization.

CHAIR KOOKESH asked if that means this bill would establish the fund and then an appropriations bill will follow to fund it.

MS. SLAGLE said that is correct.

SENATOR OLSON asked if this will decrease the state's ability to get federal funds for big projects.

MS. SLAGLE said the bill will not impact the ability to get funds from the federal government. Other states are trying to deal with the decrease in federal funds by different means like increasing fuel taxes, bonding and tolls. This is an approach the governor thought was appropriate for Alaska.

SENATOR WILKEN asked to look again at slide 17 again to see what other states have done. He asked if Alaska is the only state that doesn't have a general fund component for transportation and asked if this is correct.

MR. RICHARDS said that is correct. All 49 other states have a transportation fund.

SENATOR WILKEN asked Mr. Richards to discuss slides 17-21 and 26 for some background.

MR. RICHARDS said that Alaska has been fortunate to receive almost \$6.44 of federal highway funds for every dollar that is spent at the gas pump. Re-authorization of the highway bill will take place in 2010. The emphasis in a new bill will be on greenhouse gas reduction. As a recipient state, Alaska will likely see a significant reduction in what it receives. The new national commission that was charged to look at the next re-authorization released a report last week that proposed a complete makeover of the whole federal transportation system.

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SENATOR WILKEN asked if the expectation of funds coming to Alaska from offshore will be less.

MR. RICHARDS replied that is correct. He indicated on the chart what other states have been receiving and how they are funding their transportation needs. Other states fund approximately 70 to 80 percent of their transportation needs using funds they collect through fees and other structures like gas taxes, tolls, and public/private partnerships. They rely on 20 to 30 percent of federal funds. In Alaska, state ownership is about 40 percent. The types of funding used by other states would be difficult to institute in Alaska with its small population base. The strategic advantages of having a state-funded program are that projects can be completed faster which equates to being less costly. Federal laws don't have to be followed. For example, NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) is avoided if there are no federal actions involved such as wetlands permits. Preventative maintenance could avoid the NEPA process if federal funds are not involved. Another demanding law that would be avoided is specific to DOTPF funds and applies to recreational refuge and historic properties.

Slide 21 identifies a typical project with a federal timeline of seven years; each phase of a project in a federal program must be completed before the next phase can begin. For example, an environmental phase which averages three years must be conducted before a right-of-way phase can begin. The benefit of a state-funded program is that many of these processes can be conducted concurrently. For example, DOTPF saved three years time on the Dalton Highway and two years on the Elmore Road.

CHAIR KOOKESH asked if those were federally funded projects.

MR. RICHARDS said they were all state general funded projects.

MS. SLAGLE added that there have been some federal projects along the Dalton Highway.

SENATOR WILKEN asked Mr. Richards to discuss slide 26.

MR. RICHARDS said that individual project appropriations don't allow the DOTPF to develop a programmatic approach. In lean years appropriations have been small. This in turn impacts the construction, design and engineering communities because there isn't a consistent approach to keep the work flowing and folks employed. The \$50 million generated by the Alaska Transportation

Fund would give the DOTPF the ability to have a systematic approach. With individual appropriations an estimate in year one for a project might, because of inflation, run out of money by year five. When that happens it's necessary to return to the legislature to ask for additional funds.

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MR. RICHARDS said that with a programmatic approach it would be possible to cover those increased costs by shifting funds from one project to another. It would be more efficient and would result in substantial savings. That would be similar to what's done with federal highway and federal aviation programs. He noted that to raise an equivalent \$50 million would require raising the existing gas tax 150 percent, from eight cents to twenty cents.

CHAIR KOOKESH asked where the \$50 million came from.

MR. RICHARDS said that is the initial revenue stream that would be seen in the first year.

SENATOR COWDERY asked what process would be used to prioritize the projects.

MR. RICHARDS explained that DOTPF would develop a listing of projects similar to the STIP (statewide transportation improvement program). In individual years the projects would be submitted to the legislature for appropriation.

SENATOR COWDERY asked about funding for the Alaska Marine Highway.

MR. RICHARDS said that is one of the transportation modes in the state and it would be eligible to receive money from this fund.

AVES THOMPSON, Executive Director, Alaska Trucking Association (ATA), Anchorage, AK, said the organization represents trucking interests from Barrow to Ketchikan. It is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2008. It represents more than 200 member companies throughout the state. Trucking employs over 21,000 people in Alaska. It pays more than \$928 million in wages annually and makes a huge contribution to the state economy. One of the priorities of the ATA is to expand the DOTPF general fund capital projects program. It's clear that federal funding will not meet Alaska's transportation infrastructure needs. Given the enormous tax revenue increases, Alaska needs to invest some money in the state's transportation system.

MR. THOMPSON said the transportation endowment fund can serve as a primary funding source to enable significant expansion of the state general fund capital projects program. The description on page 1, lines 13-14, is broad and covers a lot of different projects. The highway trust fund has been depleted partly because of the heavy demand coming from projects not related to highways highway projects. The federal highway trust fund will run out of money in 2009. Although there are modes of travel other than highways in Alaska, it seems that Alaska's highway system serves the largest portion of the population. Freight movement and tourist and personal travel are on the rise and demands will continue to grow exponentially. The largest share of the project dollars made available through this fund should be directed to the highway system. Non-highway projects need to be considered on their own merits after seeking other sources. In Alaska there are two major highway systems, the National Highway System and the Alaska State Highway system. These are systems of connecting routes that link communities and workplaces. They are the major routes that carry a large portion of all the freight delivered in Alaska. ATA supports SB 236.

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CINDY BETTINE, Member, MatSu Borough Assembly, Wasilla, AK, said she represents District 5 which has two of the most dangerous roads in the state according to DOTPF, based on accidents and death. She supports SB 236 and hopes the funding will amount to more than \$6 million a year. MatSu is one of the fastest growing areas of the state, she said, and taxpayers contribute over \$10 million a year. Because of the population growth and the over use of state roads, local roads are taking a beating. What were originally developed as residential subdivision roads are now used for short cuts between state roads. One of their trunk roads has had priority for over 20 years and over the intervening years, the cost has escalated to over \$40 million. Utilities have been moved. Rights-of-way have been purchased.

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MARIAN ROMANO, Borough Manger, MatSu Borough, Palmer, AK, said she supports this bill but said it is not enough to meet the present needs of the state or even the MatSu Borough. One third of the state's network is in the MatSu Borough. The borough has three of the most dangerous roads in the state, according to accident data from DOTPF. There were five fatalities in January on state roads. Their recent long-range transportation plan shows that \$1.5 billion is needed over the next 20 year to prevent gridlock. Asphalt has tripled in price and the cost of

right-of-way acquisition in the MatSu Borough has doubled. The borough has already spent \$12 million on the Seward Meridian Highway. It has identified the right-of-way, but there is no money to purchase it. This puts home owners in a position where they can't sell their houses and therefore, cannot afford to buy another house. This is a critical north/south artery and has been on the list for 20 years. It provides access to a new hospital and to the college which is currently expanding and taking on four-year students. The population of the Kinick/Goose Bay Road area is considered equal to the fifth largest city in the state. This is a main access road to the new state prison. DOTPF doesn't have this road on its list. The borough is taxing itself to meet its own needs. There is a local contribution of \$6 million to local roads and the community provides gravel for free to DOTPF. She suggested the committee consider matching programs to recognize communities' willingness to use their own resources.

[2:29:25 PM](#)

SENATOR WILKEN moved SB 236 from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s). There being no objection, the motion carried.

[2:30:05 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Kookesh adjourned the meeting.