

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE

March 22, 2011

1:04 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Peggy Wilson, Chair
Representative Lance Pruitt, Vice Chair
Representative Eric Feige
Representative Craig Johnson
Representative Cathy Engstrom Munoz
Representative Max Gruenberg
Representative Pete Petersen

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

BILL: HB 131

SHORT TITLE: COMMUNITY AND TRANSPORTATION ADV. BOARD

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) MUNOZ

01/28/11	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/28/11	(H)	TRA, FIN
03/15/11	(H)	TRA AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 17
03/15/11	(H)	Heard & Held
03/15/11	(H)	MINUTE(TRA)
03/22/11	(H)	TRA AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 17

HOUSE BILL NO. 131

"An Act establishing the Alaska Community and Public Transportation Advisory Board and relating to a long-range community and public transportation plan; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED CSHB 131(TRA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

OVERVIEW BY THE ALASKA MOOSE FEDERATION

- HEARD

WITNESS REGISTER

KENDRA KLOSTER, Staff
Representative Cathy Munoz
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the discussion of HB 131.

PAT BRANSON, Executive Director, Senior Citizens of Kodiak;
Member; Alaska Commission on Aging (ACG);
Member; Governor's Coordinated Transportation Task Force(GCTTF)
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the discussion of HB 131

GARY OLSON, Executive Director
Alaska Moose Federation (AMF)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented an overview on issues related to
moose on roadways.

PAT KEMP, Deputy Commissioner
Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOTPF)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during discussion.

RON JORDAN, Chair
Taku/Campbell Community Council
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the discussion of the
Alaska Moose Federation overview.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:04:46 PM](#)

CHAIR PEGGY WILSON called the House Transportation Standing
Committee meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. Representatives Wilson,
Johnson, Munoz, Feige, Gruenberg, and Petersen were present at
the call to order. Representative Pruitt arrived as the meeting
was in progress.

HB 131-COMMUNITY AND TRANSPORTATION ADV. BOARD

[1:05:13 PM](#)

CHAIR P. WILSON announced that the first only order of business
would be HOUSE BILL NO. 131, "An Act establishing the Alaska

Community and Public Transportation Advisory Board and relating to a long-range community and public transportation plan; and providing for an effective date."

1:05:39 PM

KENDRA KLOSTER, Staff, Representative Cathy Munoz, Alaska State Legislature, recapped HB 131 on behalf of the prime sponsor. She explained that HB 131 would create a Community and Transportation Advisory Board (CTAB), which was recommended by the Governor's Coordinated Transportation Task Force (GCTTF). The GCTTF has been doing an excellent job in addressing community transportation needs across the state, but it decided having a permanent board, the Community and Transportation Advisory Board (CTAB) would be advantageous. She explained that nearly seven million trips are provided by the communities annually. The proposed CTAB member composition would be similar to the GCTTF except for the addition of a representative from the Denali Commission. She reiterated the additional CTAB members. She explained the fiscal note, relating the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) indicated that \$90,000 in costs would be covered by federal receipts, \$10,000 in state matching funds, and an additional \$10,000 from the Alaska Mental Health Trust general fund monies.

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PAT BRANSON, Executive Director, Senior Citizens of Kodiak; Member; Alaska Commission on Aging (ACG); Member; Governor's Coordinated Transportation Task Force (GCTTF), stated that the Senior Citizens of Kodiak is the lead agency for the Kodiak Coordinated Transportation System. She related that it provides 1,500 rides to seniors and Alaska Mental Health Trust beneficiaries each month. The transit system provides a link to senior services and routine trips for dental, medical or shopping. Access to these activities helps keep senior citizens active in the community. The added community transportation system adds to the local economy and helps provide a balanced community. She asked members to imagine returning to their home communities and not have a car or the ability to travel to places they wished to go. She said people cannot always count

on friends and relatives for rides. She indicated the goal of these organizations is to help people retain a sense of remaining in their own community, no matter what age, and living independently for as long as possible. She maintained that this goal is one the GCTTF wants for all Alaskans. She reported that with respect to the ACG, of the 2,797 seniors who responded to an ACG survey, 47 percent rated transportation of great importance. Recent surveys in Kodiak also rated transportation of even higher importance in Kodiak. She explained that one of the positive results from participating in the GCTTF has been to discuss and review funding and approaches with various agencies to provide efficient transportation to communities.

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MS. BRANSON explained the importance of having a full scope of connecting agencies that understand funding streams, transportation needs, and availability. Many state agencies fund transportation services but do not connect or understand transportation funding. The Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) receives federal pass through funds directed to transit systems for public and coordinated transit systems. However, state funding does not support transit systems, she said. The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) also obtains federal pass through funding for senior transportation. Other agencies, such as the Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DLWD) and Vocational Rehabilitation, or Medicaid provide transportation services, but the services are not coordinated or streamlined to provide efficient transportation for dollars spent. The GCTTF has held long-range planning discussions statewide, including public input. The public has clearly identified transportation as a key issue for residents no matter where they live in the state or which mode of transportation they use.

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MS. BRANSON highlighted the importance of HB 131 since it would provide a permanent board to continue to improve agency coordination, efficiencies, cost saving measures for the delivery of transit services, and removal of barriers that

prevent Alaskans from traveling within their communities so they can remain in Alaska.

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CHAIR P. WILSON, after first determining no one else wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 131.

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REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG made a motion to adopt Amendment 1, which read, as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Page 3, line 7, following "year"

Insert, ", or is otherwise unable to serve."

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG explained that proposed Amendment 1 would allow the majority of the board the right to petition the governor to remove a board member if a member misses more than two meetings in a calendar year or is not able to serve. This would make it clear that the board is not limited to the ability to petition for any reason other than missing meetings.

There being no objection, Amendment 1 was adopted.

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REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG made a motion to adopt Amendment 2, labeled 27-LS0418\M.1, Kane, 3/15/11, which read, as follows:

Page 4, line 3, following "available":

Insert "(1)"

Page 4, line 6, following "funding":

Insert "; and

(2) from federal sources for the expenses of the board and report that information to the governor, the chairs of the senate and house finance committees, and the chairs of the senate and house transportation committees"

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON objected for the purpose of discussion.

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG explained Amendment 2 would expand the annual review to include examining the effective use of funding from federal sources, plus it would further identify the specific committees who would receive the report. He explained that this would help identify an issue in which the federal funds were pulled and the legislature was not aware of the change.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON removed his objection. There being no objection, Amendment 2 was adopted.

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REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG moved to report HB 131, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, the CSHB 131(TRA) was reported from the House Transportation Standing Committee.

OVERVIEW BY THE ALASKA MOOSE FEDERATION

[1:16:27 PM](#)

CHAIR P. WILSON announced that the final order of business would be a brief overview by the Alaska Moose Federation.

[1:17:05 PM](#)

GARY OLSON, Executive Director, Alaska Moose Federation (AMF), explained that the Alaska Moose Federation is a solely nonprofit organization. He offered to e-mail his presentation to committee members. He reported that the parents of a serviceman who was tragic killed in a vehicle/moose collision came to Juneau to talk to legislators about the death of their son, Specialist (Spc.) Steven "Max" Cavanaugh, Jr. Mr. and Mrs. Cavanaugh related that their son had returned from Iraq after surviving 300 convoys as a turret gunner. In December 2007, shortly after returning home, Spc. Cavanaugh was killed in a vehicular crash involving a moose at Dowling and New Seward Highway, two weeks prior to his scheduled discharge from the

military. He remarked that in 2007, Spc. Cavanaugh was the sixth person who died as a result of a moose/vehicular crash.

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MR. OLSON explained that due to the multiple fatality collisions the AMF has urged state agencies to make changes. Historically, wildlife has been a part of life in Alaska. Animals frequently use the roadways and railroad corridors. In 1995, The Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) plane, the first of its kind to crash, killed 24 airmen when it crashed on Elmendorf Air Force Base (AFB). The plane lost power to both port side engines after these engines ingested several Canada Geese during takeoff. As a result, the state prioritized airport safety, changing the types of plants that were planted along the runways in order to reduce wildlife on the runways. The same changes have not happened along the roadways but are necessary, he said. He related that the AMF proposes several suggestions to mitigate the moose/vehicle fatalities, including not planting any moose browse, such as mountain ash, along the roadways, in the medians, or at schools. He pointed out that moose are frequently seen feeding on mountain ash or other ornamental shrubs or trees along the highways and at schools. He remarked it is unacceptable for the state to continue to plant moose browse. The AMF would like the state to implement programs that have succeeded in the past.

MR. OLSON thanked the new leadership in the Governor's administration, relating the AMF has made more progress in the past six months than it has in the previous six years. He applauded the new leadership at the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF).

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MR. OLSON explained some changes that have happened. The DOT&PF has provided grant funds which have allowed the AMF to outfit donated trucks so crews can salvage moose kills as part of the salvage program. The AMF performs salvage operations under the Alaska State Trooper (AST) oversight, he said. He explained

that charities are no longer required to come to the roadway during the middle of the night for animal recovery. He highlighted that he has personally picked up 25 to 30 moose himself as part of the salvage crew. He reported that the AMF is on call "24/7" and they time their salvage operations. The ATF has documented saving the Anchorage Police Department 2.5 hours per retrieval for moose roadway kills as compared to the time it would take for a charity to respond. Previously, various charities would be called and would often butcher a moose along the roadway. He detailed some "horror stories" that have ensued, including charity members spending long hours hunched over a moose carcass along the highway.

MR. OLSON related that the AST officers have requested the AMF expand its program. He characterized the AMF salvage as a good program. The AMF identified that when a cow moose is killed in a crash, often within a day or two the moose cow's calf would also be killed in a subsequent crash. He related once he reported the issue to the ADF&G, the ADF&G researched the matter, and discovered a prior in-house study that demonstrated moose calves remain in the traffic corridor after a moose cow is killed. He suggested that AMF recommends surviving moose calves be sedated and relocated by the ADF&G.

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MR. OLSON encouraged the committee to address these issues since it will save lives. He suggested expanding the right-of-way area in known moose areas. He highlighted that the DOT&PF has expanded the right-of-way, removed trees along a 13-mile stretch of roadway on the Parks Highway from Willow. However, the DOT&PF did not remove the tree roots, so the next year the trees will grow and become a "moose buffet." The AMF would like the right-of-way roadway cleared so moose will be silhouetted and visible to drivers. The U.S. government has performed similar work along the Alaska/Canada (ALCAN) highway, he said. He explained that once trees and shrubs are removed from the roadway corridor, the corridor can then be maintained with a mower.

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MR. OLSON described other technologies, including at-grade crosswalks comprised of a rubber material mat with a copper matrix that emits a charge when an animal attempts to cross the roadway. This technology has been proven to be safe for humans who derive insulation from shoes and car tires. This technology is being implemented as standard protocol in Washington, Utah, and other Lower 48 states. He reported that DOT&PF intends to use this technology on the Glenn Highway between Fort Richardson and Muldoon Road.

MR. OLSON highlighted the Alaska Highway Safety Office (AHSO) currently grooms trails parallel to the Parks Highway to encourage moose to use the trails rather than using the roadway and birch trees are cut every few hundred feet to supply food. The AMF would like to expand this process into a diversionary feeding program which would use silage grown at Point Mackenzie to feed moose during the winter. Similar feeding programs have been used in Norway. He reported that during an 18-year study, this feeding program has resulted in a 46 percent reduction in moose/vehicle collisions. He recapped that the tools to reduce moose/vehicle collisions are available. He reiterated that the AMF requests the legislature make this a priority and to work with the agencies to accomplish moose mitigation goals. In closing, he told members about a school incident which happened recently. He related that a kindergarten student was kicked by a moose last week and is still in a coma. This incident illustrated the problems moose pose around schools. He applauded the administration and urged members to consider mitigation measures as an investment and not a cost, particularly at a time in which federal dollars may be reduced.

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REPRESENTATIVE PETERSEN recalled that the ADF&G has been considering relocating moose calves. He asked for a definition of a moose calf and whether he is speaking about a yearling calf or a smaller animal.

MR. OLSON responded that two different programs would apply. In one, the AMF and ADF&G would rescue the smallest moose calf

orphans and care for them at Point MacKenzie for the intent to later release them in areas with depleted moose populations. He recalled that in the 1950s, 24 orphan calves were released in the Copper River Delta area, which did not have an indigenous moose population. Since 1960 local area residents have harvested over 5,000 moose so the moose have been thriving. He outlined the intent of relocating orphan moose calves would be to use them as seed stock to expedite recovery in some moose herds. The larger moose calves would require sedation and transport via trailer. The plan would be to move the moose calves away from transportation corridors to existing herds with problems, such as Game Management Unit 13, away from transportation corridors. Another plan would be to pull the moose on pallets behind snow cats and relocate them five miles away from the road corridors so they have a chance to survive.

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CHAIR P. WILSON, referred to a letter in members packets from DOT&PF which indicated that the AMF may not qualify for federal or state grants. She remarked that does not diminish the importance of the safety issue. She recalled a personal experience when she was working in Tok. A person had a heart attack and needed transport from the Tok clinic to Anchorage. The person said he was afraid of flying so he did not want to be flown to Anchorage. He arranged for his friend to drive him and during the trip, their vehicle hit a moose and they both died. She further recalled the Tok ambulance driver would have a passenger sitting in the front seat whose job was to watch for moose adjacent to the road. She reiterated the big safety issue.

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REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG mentioned that his wife is president of Anchorage Unleashed. This organization encourages the use of dog parks in Anchorage. He asked for contact information and suggested that the AMF work with the Anchorage Unleashed since the organization is considering plantings in dog parks, such as wild roses. He reiterated the suggestion that the organizations confer with the AMF since some plants attract moose and

Anchorage Unleashed would not want to attract moose to the roadway near Jewel Lake Road.

MR. OLSON agreed. He related that planners have the best intentions but continue to plant moose browse on school grounds. He suggested school age children should participate in the process to educate adults about the dangers moose browse causes on school grounds.

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CHAIR P. WILSON asked whether he could advise if any plants are not food.

MR. OLSON answered that anything without leaves. In further response to Chair P. Wilson, he responded that the Strategic Highway Safety Plan steering committee contains the moose mitigation measures. He pointed out that the Safe Routes to School Program encourages students to bike to school yet the schools attract moose with the trees and other vegetation planted on school grounds and near bike paths.

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REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE asked how extensive the AMF organization is and whether it is a statewide organization.

MR. OLSON responded that the AMF has been focused on the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and Anchorage areas but in the past few months has expanded to other areas of the state.

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CHAIR P. WILSON asked whether the AMF would be requesting state funding.

MR. OLSON answered yes. He explained that the AMF has requested \$3 to \$4 million related to its safety programs. In further response to Chair Wilson, he offered his belief that the funding would be included in the capital budget.

1:40:02 PM

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE asked whether the AMF has considered recommending harvesting more moose in the highway corridor areas in Anchorage.

MR. OLSON related that historically hunts have happened in Eagle River and Eklutna. He recalled an archery hunt in which a cow moose laid down in someone's driveway with an arrow projecting from it. It was front page news. The AMF has attempted to avoid hunting and non-hunting issues. While the AMF is not opposed to hunting and has strong rural participation, the immediate focus has been focused on the roadways. He surmised the meat value of a moose in rural Alaska is \$8,500. He suggested the potential value of a calf moose could result in about 70 animals over time if the calf produces offspring so the choice could be to either hunt the moose cow or use it as seed stock. He stated that the AMF would support a hunt in the Anchorage Bowl to reduce collisions.

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PAT KEMP, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOTPF), reported that he first became involved in the AMF in January. He related that DOT&PF has two programs which are not specifically set up to address the moose mitigation issues. He stated the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration grants and the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) are programs that are data driven. He considered setting up a mitigation bank through the U.S. Corps of Engineers permitting funds but found out it is not possible. He pointed out that his efforts resulted in the March 9, 2011 letter Chair Wilson previously mentioned. However, the DOT&PF will contemplate pursuing a program with a steady source of funding to help mitigate the problem. The DOT&PF has previously issued a number of grants to the AMF totaling \$276,000, but the funds used were from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). However, he said he did not believe the FHWA source would be a reliable source for ongoing funds. He affirmed that to address the moose/collision issues, the DOT&PF would need a more reliable source of funding.

[1:44:15 PM](#)

CHAIR P. WILSON asked about the Strategic Highway Safety Plan. She asked whether the DOT&PF would begin to look at plantings and how wide median is on new construction projects.

MR. KEMP related that the DOT&PF will clear to the edge of right-of-way, which also protects the roadway from roots encroaching on the roadway. He said he was unaware of the re-growth issues. He suggested that some features could be included in the capital projects but generally speaking, the DOT&PF is not set up to address the moose issues.

CHAIR P. WILSON asked whether the legislature could provide any guidance to ensure emphasis on the moose problems around roadways. She emphasized her desire to see moose mitigation issues taken into account.

MR. KEMP cautioned that the legislature must be careful since the price of mitigating moose may be higher cost than the road rehabilitation. He suggested that the DOT&PF may be able to develop a policy to consider the features and put extra effort into moose crossing areas. He hoped to find solutions.

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REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE asked whether he has ever lived in rural areas.

MR. KEMP answered no.

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE asked whether changing the regulations that would allow hunting from the roadway reduce moose issues.

MR. KEMP said he is not an expert in that matter.

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE stated he represents the highway district, that he knows where all the crossing points are located. He pointed out the DOT&PF has cleared trees along some roadways, which has made a big difference. He offered his belief the

solution will be in including specifications in the rehabilitation. He also suggested better lighting, including halogen lighting, which can considerably help motorists avoid accidents.

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REPRESENTATIVE PETERSEN recalled noticing trees planted in the median and moose foraging. He suggested not planting any trees in the median.

MR. KEMP answered that all of these suggestions will be considered by the DOT&PF. He related the DOT&PF will also consider working with the U.S. Corps of Engineer to use mitigation funds.

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RON JORDAN, Chair, Taku/Campbell Community Council, stated that the Taku/Campbell Community Council area is bordered by Minnesota Drive, New Seward Highway, Anchorage International Airport Road and Dimond Boulevard. He has lived in the area for 18 years and has chaired the council for six years. He related his understanding that in the past 10 to 15 years approximately 400 moose have been killed in the area due to the foliage on the roadway. He told members he has a photo of a moose walking along Arctic Boulevard and C Street going side to side eating trees. He agreed that public safety is a concern. He stressed that he has encouraged planners not to plant trees as part of the Dowling Road Extension project. He said a moose was killed within one week of the roundabout completion on C Street and O'Malley Road opening. He noted that foliage had been planted in the center of the roundabout. He suggested the state do what it can to prevent accidents.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON inquired whether the DOT&PF is required to plant and vegetate the roadway as part of the FHWA standards.

MR. KEMP related that the DOT&PF plants for slope stability, but much of the foliage is driven through the public beautification process. He offered his belief that the DOT&PF can review the standards. He related he understands the concerns and issues being outlined today.

CHAIR P. WILSON asked him to check on any rules that apply.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON explained that he is very familiar with the roundabouts in Anchorage. He related that part of the psychology of a roundabout is to slow people down. He further related that the trees are placed in the roundabout so drivers cannot see the opposite side of the roundabout and so the drivers slow down. He reiterated the plantings represent a psychological engineering technique. He said he likes the roundabout process, but obscuring the view never made sense to him. He now has a better understanding about the roundabouts.

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ stated that HB 131 represents an opportunity to bring this issue into the planning process since it represents an opportunity to coordinate community and public transportation.

[1:58:07 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 1:58 p.m.