

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE

March 22, 2016

1:14 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Neal Foster, Co-Chair
Representative Shelley Hughes, Co-Chair
Representative Louise Stutes
Representative Matt Claman
Representative Dan Ortiz

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Charisse Millett
Representative Benjamin Nageak

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 230

"An Act designating Pipeline Road 34-ALP-3 as Arctic Man Way."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 319

"An Act relating to registration fees for snowmobiles and off-highway vehicles."

- MOVED HB 319 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 230

SHORT TITLE: NAMING ARCTIC MAN WAY

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) COLVER

01/19/16	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/16
01/19/16	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/19/16	(H)	TRA, FIN
03/22/16	(H)	TRA AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 17

BILL: HB 319

SHORT TITLE: SNOWMOBILE REGISTRATION FEES

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) TILTON

02/19/16	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
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02/19/16 (H) TRA, FIN
03/08/16 (H) TRA AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 17
03/08/16 (H) Heard & Held
03/08/16 (H) MINUTE(TRA)
03/22/16 (H) TRA AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 17

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER

Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HB 230, as prime sponsor.

HOWARD THIES, President

Arctic Man Ski and Snow Classic
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 230.

REPRESENTATIVE TILTON

Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HB 319, as prime sponsor.

AMY ERICKSON, Director

Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV)
Department of Administration (DOA)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Responded to questions, during the hearing on HB 319.

LIEUTENANT STEVEN ADAMS, Coordinator

Search and Rescue (SAR)
Alaska State Troopers (AST)
Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Responded to questions, during the hearing on HB 319.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:14:14 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR SHELLEY HUGHES called the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:14 p.m. Representatives Ortiz, Foster, Stutes and Hughes were present at the call to order. Representative Claman arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 230-NAMING ARCTIC MAN WAY

1:14:45 PM

CO-CHAIR HUGHES announced that the first order of business would be House Bill No. 230, "An Act designating Pipeline Road 34-ALP-3 as Arctic Man Way."

1:15:02 PM

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented HB 230, regarding the Arctic Man Ski and Snow classic ("Arctic Man"). He paraphrased from the sponsor statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

This Act designates Trans-Alaska Pipeline Access Road 34-ALP-3 at mile 197.5 of the Richardson Highway as Arctic Man Way in honor of the historic Arctic Man Race held in the Hoodoo Mountains every April for the past 30 years.

The Arctic Man is one of the World's Toughest Downhill Ski races, and an exciting snowmobile race, all in one. The skier begins at a summit elevation of 5,800 feet and drops 1700 feet in less than two mile to the bottom of a narrow canyon where he meets up with his snowmobiling partner.

The snowmobiler meets the skier, on the go, with a tow rope and pulls the skier 2 1/4 miles uphill at top speeds of up to 86 mph. The skier and the snowmobile then separate and the skier goes over the side of the second mountain and drops another 1200 feet to the finish line.

This race brings together thousands of spectators and participants from all over the world. Legend has it that the race began as a result of a bet wagered between skiers and snow machine riders, and was later developed into an annual race by Howard Thies.

The Arctic Man Race has also adopted other family events, creating a festive atmosphere for both spectators and participants.

Pipeline Road 34-ALP-3 leads to the area where the race is held annually, and therefore will be aptly renamed as Arctic Man Way.

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REPRESENTATIVE COLVER directed attention to the committee packet to highlight a photo of then gubernatorial candidate, Bill Walker, participating in the 2014 race, and the fiscal note for \$200 from the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF). A land use permit issued by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for the area used for parking during the festival, he explained, and the Arctic Man organization has agreed to purchase the road sign and contribute to the installation cost.

CO-CHAIR FOSTER noted the discrepancy between the cost of the fiscal note and the cost quoted in the letter from the organizations President, Howard Thies. He offered his assumption that the difference might be attributable to the labor costs.

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER clarified that the initial, DOTPF estimate was \$800-\$1,000, which the Arctic Man organization pledged to fund, as indicated in the letter from Howard Thies, President, dated 2/8/16 [available in the committee packet]. He explained that, given an existing post for mounting the sign, the cost was able to be reduced. Representative Colver said signage would conform to highway standards and DOTPF specifications.

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CO-CHAIR HUGHES questioned why the fiscal note covers materials and doesn't include installation costs, and asked for the sponsor's assurance, guaranteeing the amount represented.

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER responded that there would be no expectations for the state to cover the cost of the sign or installation.

CO-CHAIR HUGHES questioned whether the Arctic Man organization would still be willing to cover costs exceeding the \$200 fiscal note. Additionally, she asked if the legislature is allowed to name a road without installing associated signage.

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER offered his assumption that the legislature could nominate naming/renaming for any facility, but

whether or not a sign is required presents a separate issue. He stated his understanding that under HB 230 the legislature is simply recognizing a name, and that the official name would remain [Pipeline Road 34-ALp-3].

CO-CHAIR HUGHES questioned whether public safety is a concern.

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER answered yes. He explained that the area is through a mountain pass and the road can easily be missed, especially in times of inclement weather, which frequently occurs between Delta Junction and Glennallen. He said a sign could help prevent people unfamiliar to the area from getting lost as well as help direct emergency responders. He said that the Alaska State Trooper presence has been scaled back to the current fiscal situation faced by the state.

[1:25:38 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR HUGHES pondered how the sign would be positioned and its visibility to drivers traveling at high speed on the Richardson Highway.

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER explained that the plan is to install a standard road marker sign and not an early indicator sign. He said the road north of Paxson was built to the original standards and, thus, is very narrow; DOTPF is working to complete incremental upgrades. The area represents a very difficult stretch of highway which is closed at times for various reasons. He pointed out that double tanker trucks frequently traverse the Richardson Highway between Valdez and the North Pole refinery and there have been a number of accidents, as well as oil spills. Upgrading the corridor to meet public safety standards is an anticipated priority.

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HOWARD THIES, President, Arctic Man Ski and Snow Classic, said the 2016 marks the event's thirty-first anniversary, and that it is the primary fundraiser for the organization.

CO-CHAIR HUGHES asked whether Arctic Man would cover the cost for signage, should it exceed the current \$200 fiscal note.

[1:30:04 PM](#)

MR. THIES explained that the board met and approved the expense. He expressed concern that the sign may be stolen, as it represents a piece of memorabilia.

CO-CHAIR HUGHES asked if Arctic Man is willing to help maintain the sign and assure that there are no costs to DOTPF.

MR. THIES stated that as long as the sign doesn't go missing once a week, the organization is happy to help with any associated maintenance costs.

CO-CHAIR HUGHES announced that HB 230 would be held over.

HB 319-SNOWMOBILE REGISTRATION FEES

[1:31:49 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR HUGHES announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 319, "An Act relating to registration fees for snowmobiles and off-highway vehicles."

[1:32:00 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TILTON, Alaska State Legislature, explained that the impetus for HB 319 was brought to her attention by a snowmobile and off-highway vehicle user group. She said the bill increases the registration fee, at the group's behest, from \$10 to \$20. She informed the committee that the legislature has supported a fund for several years that takes snow machine registration fees and puts them back into trail maintenance and safety.

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CO-CHAIR FOSTER offered acknowledged the efforts of the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation staff ensure that rural locales are being addressed.

CO-CHAIR HUGHES stated her understanding that the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) would be improving its records system to provide more effective registration renewal distributions, and revenue collections. She asked for an update regarding the timeframe of the upgrades and expected results; specifically the actual number of snow machines versus the number for which registration fees are collected.

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AMY ERICKSON, Director, Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV), Department of Administration, said DMV is undergoing a modernization project, which she surmised is the reference being made by Representative Hughes.

CO-CHAIR HUGHES said that the committee heard testimony regarding a disparity between the amount of registration fees being collected and the actual number of snow machines that are operating across the state. She stated her understanding that the improvements being made at DMV would rectify this situation.

MS. ERICKSON reported that there are currently 39,000 off-highway vehicles registered with DMV. The majority are registered for a two-year period, a few for six years, and some under a four year category which is being eliminated.

CO-CHAIR HUGHES asked the sponsor to explain the DMV upgrade, as it relates an increase in fee collection. She recalled testimony from the previous hearing that the DMV currently collects \$200 thousand annually in snow machine registration fees, and witnesses stating that they lacked awareness of the requirement to register, nor had they received renewal notices.

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REPRESENTATIVE TILTON answered that it was her understanding that the DMV was upgrading its systems functionality, which might help with notifications.

MS. ERICKSON explained that without entering registered owners into the database, the DMV has no basis to issue renewal notices. She pointed out that dealerships, in some rural areas, were not collecting registration fees. She pointed out that the DMV is not an enforcement agency, but could review the responsibility for dealerships to register.

CO-CHAIR HUGHES voiced concern about noncompliance for registering/registration renewal if snow machines, and asked whether the DMV has plans to address the issue.

MS. ERICKSON answered no it does not.

CO-CHAIR HUGHES opined that the concern for search and rescue (SAR) is statewide, and ties into the registration fees. She opined that the state is obligated to respond on behalf of the public's welfare and bear the associated costs.

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LIEUTENANT STEVEN ADAMS, Coordinator, Search and Rescue (SAR), Alaska State Troopers (AST), Department of Public Safety (DPS), said the annual estimate for SAR is \$690 thousand, and 30 percent of the "call outs" are snow machine related incidents; representing about \$207 thousand. Every response is unique depending on the geographical locale and the resources required. He stated that \$1,600 dollars is the average amount spent per mission.

CO-CHAIR HUGHES suggested that the department could potentially lower costs if it used drones for SAR reconnaissance versus manned aircraft.

CO-CHAIR FOSTER asked if the trooper's pay was included in the cost \$1,600 estimate.

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LIEUTENANT ADAMS answered that the estimate did not include the extra cost for personnel, including the payroll for any DPS employee.

REPRESENTATIVE TILTON acknowledged the importance of SAR and said costs were split between user groups: hiking, fishing, and snow machining. She expressed her concern over how the state could help to fund SAR overall.

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CO-CHAIR HUGHES closed public testimony after ascertaining no one wished to testify.

[1:43:08 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FOSTER moved to report HB 319, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HB 319 was reported from the House Transportation Standing Committee.

[1:43:46 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 1:43 p.m.