

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

May 13, 2021

1:53 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Robert Myers, Chair  
Senator Mike Shower, Vice Chair  
Senator Peter Micciche  
Senator Jesse Kiehl

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Click Bishop

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 63 (STA)

"An Act relating to the duties of the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities; renaming the Alaska Marine Transportation Advisory Board the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board; relating to the membership and duties of the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board; and relating to the comprehensive, intermodal, long-range transportation plan for the state."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 117

"An Act relating to the state procurement code; establishing the construction manager general contractor procurement method; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED SB 117 OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 34

"An Act naming the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots' Memorial Bridge."

- MOVED HB 34 OUT OF COMMITTEE

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 63

SHORT TITLE: ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY OPERATIONS BOARD

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) STUTES

02/18/21 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/15/21  
 02/18/21 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
 02/18/21 (H) TRA, STA  
 03/11/21 (H) TRA AT 1:30 PM BARNES 124  
 03/11/21 (H) Heard & Held  
 03/11/21 (H) MINUTE(TRA)  
 03/18/21 (H) TRA AT 1:30 PM BARNES 124  
 03/18/21 (H) Moved CSHB 63(TRA) Out of Committee  
 03/18/21 (H) MINUTE(TRA)  
 03/20/21 (H) TRA RPT CS(TRA) NT 4DP 2NR  
 03/20/21 (H) DP: DRUMMOND, HANNAN, SPOHNHOLZ,  
 HOPKINS  
  
 03/20/21 (H) NR: MCCABE, CRONK  
 03/30/21 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
 03/30/21 (H) Heard & Held  
 03/30/21 (H) MINUTE(STA)  
 04/06/21 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
 04/06/21 (H) Heard & Held  
 04/06/21 (H) MINUTE(STA)  
 04/15/21 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
 04/15/21 (H) Heard & Held  
 04/15/21 (H) MINUTE(STA)  
 04/22/21 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
 04/22/21 (H) Moved CSHB 63(STA) Out of Committee  
 04/22/21 (H) MINUTE(STA)  
 04/26/21 (H) STA RPT CS(STA) NT 6DP  
 04/26/21 (H) DP: CLAMAN, STORY, KAUFMAN, VANCE,  
 TARR, KREISS-TOMKINS  
  
 05/05/21 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)  
 05/05/21 (H) VERSION: CSHB 63(STA)  
 05/07/21 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
 05/07/21 (S) TRA  
 05/11/21 (S) TRA AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
 05/11/21 (S) -- MEETING CANCELED --  
 05/13/21 (S) TRA AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 117

SHORT TITLE: PROCUREMENT; CONSTRUCTION; CONTRACTS  
 SPONSOR(s): RULES BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

03/31/21 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
 03/31/21 (S) STA, TRA  
 04/27/21 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
 04/27/21 (S) Heard & Held  
 04/27/21 (S) MINUTE(STA)  
 05/06/21 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

05/06/21 (S) Moved SB 117 Out of Committee  
 05/06/21 (S) MINUTE(STA)  
 05/07/21 (S) STA RPT 4NR  
 05/07/21 (S) NR: SHOWER, COSTELLO, HOLLAND, REINBOLD  
 05/13/21 (S) TRA AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: HB 34

SHORT TITLE: NAMING VIETNAM HELI. PILOTS' MEM. BRIDGE

SPONSOR(s): SHAW

02/18/21 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/21  
 02/18/21 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
 02/18/21 (H) MLV, STA  
 02/19/21 (H) FIN REPLACES STA REFERRAL  
 02/19/21 (H) BILL REPRINTED  
 03/02/21 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
 03/02/21 (H) Heard & Held  
 03/02/21 (H) MINUTE(MLV)  
 03/04/21 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
 03/04/21 (H) Moved HB 34 Out of Committee  
 03/04/21 (H) MINUTE(MLV)  
 03/09/21 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
 03/09/21 (H) Moved HB 34 Out of Committee  
 03/09/21 (H) MINUTE(MLV)  
 03/10/21 (H) MLV RPT 6DP  
 03/10/21 (H) DP: CLAMAN, TARR, NELSON, STORY, SHAW,  
 TUCK  
 05/03/21 (H) FIN AT 1:30 PM ADAMS 519  
 05/03/21 (H) Moved HB 34 Out of Committee  
 05/03/21 (H) MINUTE(FIN)  
 05/04/21 (H) FIN RPT 9DP  
 05/04/21 (H) DP: ORTIZ, EDGMON, LEBON, CARPENTER,  
 THOMPSON, JOHNSON, JOSEPHSON,  
 RASMUSSEN,  
 05/04/21 (H) MERRICK  
 05/04/21 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)  
 05/04/21 (H) VERSION: HB 3  
 05/05/21 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
 05/05/21 (S) TRA  
 05/13/21 (S) TRA AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

**WITNESS REGISTER**

KERRY CROCKER, Staff  
 Representative Louise Stutes  
 Alaska State Legislature  
 Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided the sponsor statement and sectional analysis on behalf of the sponsor of HB 63.

SHANNON ADAMSON, Alaska Regional Representative  
International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified during the hearing on HB 63.

BEN GOLDRICH, representative  
Marine Engineers Beneficial Association (MEBA)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified during the hearing on HB 63.

ANDY MILLS, Special Assistant to the Commissioner;  
Legislative Liaison  
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented SB 117 on behalf of the administration.

ALICIA SIIRA, Executive Director  
Associated General Contractors of Alaska (AGC)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SB 117.

CHARLIE DEININGER  
Chief Procurement Officer  
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the discussion of SB 117.

SARAH LEFEBVRE, Office Manager/Contract Administrator  
Exclusive Paving  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SB 117.

REPRESENTATIVE LADDIE SHAW  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Sponsor of HB 34.

JOSH WALTON, Staff  
Representative Laddie Shaw  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified on behalf of the sponsor of HB 34.

LYNN KILE, President  
Vietnam Helicopter Pilot Association  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided invited testimony on HB 34.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[1:53:22 PM](#)

**CHAIR ROBERT MYERS** called the Senate Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:53 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Kiehl, Shower, Micciche, and Chair Myers.

#### **HB 63-ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY OPERATIONS BOARD**

[1:53:59 PM](#)

CHAIR MYERS announced the consideration of CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 63(STA), "An Act relating to the duties of the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities; renaming the Alaska Marine Transportation Advisory Board the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board; relating to the membership and duties of the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board; and relating to the comprehensive, intermodal, long-range transportation plan for the state."

[1:54:31 PM](#)

KERRY CROCKER, Staff, Representative Louise Stutes, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, provided the sponsor statement and sectional analysis on behalf of the sponsor of HB 63. He paraphrased the sponsor statement, which read:

[Original punctuation provided.]

This bill would establish a nine-member Alaska Marine Highway (AMHS) Operation's Board, with members having the skills and experience of a ferry commission or a marine business board. The board would have the ability to assess and suggest marine business practices that enhance revenue and reduce costs. Members of the board would be chosen based on experience in personnel management, ship maintenance, construction and repair, plans and activities, and they would also have insight on fleet strategy, reliability and other service objectives.

A continuing challenge for AMHS has been frequent change in policy direction, coupled with insufficient appreciation of long-term implications of such changes. Lack of clarity and long-term planning objectives such as fleet design, vessel deployment strategy, and marine business expertise have also been a hindrance.

A Marine Advisory Board was established under Alaska Statute (AS) 19.65.110, and though formed with capable individuals, it is not structured to effectively direct AMHS with its large marine business operations, planning, or solutions for issues it currently faces. Recent agendas suggest the Marine Advisory Board has kept community stakeholders informed of AMHS activities and budgets and provided them with general feedback about AMHS service. Currently the board is comprised of members from ferry service areas, which brings public transparency and community engagement, however the system cannot survive with community feedback alone. The members must additionally weigh business practices and have expertise in strategic planning.

[1:56:37 PM](#)

MR. CROCKER continued:

The AMHS Marine Operations Board would provide professional advice focused on business and financial practices of the ferry system, including fleet planning, maintenance, pricing, service models, and capital asset investment. The board would be comparable to a board of directors providing business leadership and long-term strategic planning for a corporation.

[1:57:11 PM](#)

MR. CROCKER read the sectional analysis for HB 63.

Section 1: Changes 19.05.030 by adding two duties to the Department of Transportation. 19.05.030 (8) which requires the Department to review and respond to recommendations by the Marine Operations Board and (9) to report whether or not the Alaska Marine Highway is meeting performance goals.

Section 2: Requires the Board to create comprehensive long term and short-term plans and provides them the framework detailing what should be included in the plans. Requires the Department to submit both the short-term and long-term plans, revisions, and updates to the legislature and the governor and make the plans available to the public.

[1:57:58 PM](#)

MR. CROCKER continued:

Section 3: Changes the name of the board from "Marine Transportation Advisory Board" (MTAB) to "Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board".

Section 4: Repeals AS 19.65.120(a) and is reenacted to do the following: (a) Creates a nine-member board instead of twelve, which includes the deputy commissioner of transportation and public facilities and requires each member to be an Alaska resident. (1) Requires one member to be a recognized union employee from the Alaska Marine Highway, to be appointed by the governor. Page | 2 (2) Requires one member from an Alaska native organization or tribe, appointed by the governor (3) Requires six members of the public: (A) That have experience in marine business and procurement practices, marine personnel management, commercial service options, ship maintenance, construction, and repair, fleet strategy, reliability, and regulatory compliance, or risk management (B) Two of which are appointed by the governor, two by the speaker of the house and two by the president of the senate.

[1:59:20 PM](#)

Section 5: Creates staggered six-year terms on the board instead of three-year terms, with exception of the deputy commissioner. If a vacancy arises, it allows for a new appointment to be made to serve out the remaining term of the vacant seat.

Section 6: Exempts the deputy commissioner from being removed from the board.

Section 7: Requires the board to provide orientation about the Alaska Marine Highway System to the newly appointed members. Also allows for regional

development associations to make recommendations for appointments to the board.

[2:00:06 PM](#)

MR. CROCKER continued:

Section 8: Requires the Department to provide information at the request of the board in a timely manner.

Section 9: The board will provide recommendations to the commissioner of the department. (f) creates a mechanism for reporting if the recommendations are not followed. (g) allows the board to create a taskforce consisting of non-board members to investigate matters relevant. (h) Requires the board to annually make recommendations regarding preparation of the "STIP" to the department.

Section 10: Changes the name of the board from "Marine Transportation Advisory Board" (MTAB) to "Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board".

Section 11 AS 44.0Section 11: Amends 44.42.050(a) to require the commissioner to incorporate the comprehensive long-term plan recommended by the board into the long-range plan required under the statute.

[2:01:19 PM](#)

Section 12: Repeals 19.65.120(B)

Section 13: Once this bill is enacted, this section directs the terms of members of the current Marine Transportation Advisory Board to expire on the effective date and sets new staggered terms for the members of the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board.

[2:01:53 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL asked whether the intention was for the board to only consider vessels or if it would also include shoreside activities, such as strategy, reliability and reservations.

MR. CROCKER responded that the sponsor's intent was that all aspects of AMHS would be covered, including terminals and marketing.

[2:03:06 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE recalled that the committee previously considered and amended [SB 103] with respect to the board composition for an Alaska Native from a coastal community that is served by the AMHS. However, that language does not seem to be part of this bill. The committee agreed it was important that the Alaska Native participant be from a coastal community that the AMHA serves.

MR. CROCKER answered that was covered in HB 63 [in AS 19.65.120(a)(2)], which read "one representative of an Alaska Native organization or tribe who is currently from a community served by the Alaska marine highway system, appointed by the governor;".

[2:04:13 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL referred to another change the committee made to [SB 103] was to require the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board to propose an operating and capital budget ahead of the governor's usual budget schedule. He asked whether the sponsor considered this.

MR. CROCKER answered that the sponsor believed this would inherently happen when developing the short and long-term plans. The sponsor did not think it was possible to craft the plans without considering a budget.

[2:05:31 PM](#)

CHAIR MYERS opened public testimony on HB 63.

[2:05:49 PM](#)

SHANNON ADAMSON, Alaska Regional Representative, International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots, Juneau, Alaska, said she serves on the current Marine Transportation Advisory Board (MTAB). She spoke in support of HB 63 because it created a more diverse board membership than the current MTAB. MM&P believes this will help depoliticize the board and isolate AMHS from some political infighting, she said. HB 63 also includes language to require that DOTPF incorporate the board's short and long-term plans, which would help the board with existing management and create better solutions. As a current MTAB member, she found that aspect invaluable because DOTPF has not adopted MTAB's recommendations. She offered her view that increasing funding to AMHS would not produce significant positive changes in service or sustainability unless AMHS's management structure were to change. Every report related to AMHS has recommended changes to its management structure. This bill starts that process and MM&P looks forward to that change.

[2:07:36 PM](#)

SENATOR SHOWER asked whether MM&P would support moving AMHS out of DOTPF.

MS. ADAMSON responded that MM&P would support any positive change to AMHS's current structure. The current system does not work, so that any change would be positive.

[2:08:32 PM](#)

BEN GOLDRICH, representative, Marine Engineers Beneficial Association (MEBA), Juneau, Alaska, said MEBA represents the engineers on board AMHS vessels and shoreside. He said he was fully supportive of Ms. Adamson's comments. Although he does not work on the vessels, he has worked closely with AMHS for 18 years. He said Governor Dunleavy appointed him to serve on AMHS's Reshaping Work Group. One recommendation of the group was to change AMHS's management structure, which MEBA views as necessary.

[2:09:42 PM](#)

SENATOR SHOWER asked if he would support moving AMHS being out of DOTPF.

MR. GOLDRICH answered that MEBA would support such a change.

[2:10:12 PM](#)

CHAIR MYERS, after first determining no one wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 63.

[HB 63 was held in committee.]

### **SB 117-PROCUREMENT; CONSTRUCTION; CONTRACTS**

[2:10:39 PM](#)

CHAIR MYERS announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 117 "An Act relating to the state procurement code; establishing the construction manager general contractor procurement method; and providing for an effective date."

[2:10:50 PM](#)

ANDY MILLS, Special Assistant to the Commissioner; Legislative Liaison, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF), Juneau, Alaska, on behalf of the administration, stated that SB 117 was in response to the department's desire to work directly with the contracting community. SB 117 would amend AS 36.30, the state's procurement code, by codifying the

department's current use of the CM/GC or construct manager/general contractor contracting method. He explained that the CM/GC method would provide a two-phase contract for both a project's preconstruction and construction phases. Although this method was not an option under current procurement law for competitive sealed bidding, the department has used the CM/GC contracting methodology under the state's existing innovative procurement statute for over fifteen years. He recalled that this process was used on over 20 complex projects. He said that CM/GC is included in Federal Highway Administrative regulations, in other states' regulations, and is a common and accepted practice in the construction industry. In the department's experience, CM/GC contracts could decrease contractor change orders, administrative delays and leverage department resources.

[2:12:33 PM](#)

MR. MILLS said this process could allow the department and its contractors to improve Alaska's transportation infrastructure faster, which is its mission. Once the CM/CG contracting method is adopted in statute, the department would collaborate with the Associated General Contractors of Alaska (AGC) and other stakeholders to adopt regulations, policy and guidance materials, further refining this innovative contracting method for use in Alaska.

[2:13:23 PM](#)

ALICIA SIIRA, Executive Director, Associated General Contractors of Alaska (AGC), Anchorage, Alaska, stated that AGC supports having the CM/CG tool as an alternative project delivery for DOTPF. She stated that AGC is a statewide construction trade association representing contractors, specialty contractors, suppliers and manufacturers in Alaska. AGC unites the construction industry to focus on balance and work to foster constructive legislation, regulation and standards. As previously stated, CM/CG has been used in Alaska for more than a decade. SB 117 will benefit the construction industry by modifying procurement statutes to codify the CM/CG procurement process, she said. It would allow DOTPF to use the process without submitting an innovative procurement request to the Department of Law and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for each project. This will modernize, clarify and improve the state's procurement process and align Alaska with the majority of other states.

[2:14:53 PM](#)

MS. SIIRA said SB 117 would allow DOTPF to add clarity and consistency for CM/CG use across all regions, which is a

priority for the construction industry. She stated that the passage of this bill would also provide an opportunity for the industry to participate in the development of regulations that would remedy concerns about consistency in CM/CG projects. In closing, she said AGC supports this bill and looks forward to being included in further enhancing the CM/CG process.

[2:15:48 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL asked how broadly this process would be used. He related his understanding that it was not appropriate to use this process in lots of projects.

MR. MILLS agreed with Senator Kiehl. He stated that low-bid process was predominately used by the department for administrative ease. Given the nature of many DOTPF projects, he said it wasn't necessary to use CM/GC to add efficiency or complete the process.

[2:17:10 PM](#)

CHARLIE DEININGER, Chief Procurement Officer, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF), Juneau, Alaska, responded that DOTPF has typically used CM/GC on one to three of the 100 to 120 total DOTPF projects per year. He explained that the department would develop criteria in regulation for CM/CG contracting. Further, it would require the commissioner's approval to use the CM/CG process.

[2:18:48 PM](#)

SENATOR SHOWER stated that this bill was previously heard in the State Affairs Committee, which he chairs, so he was familiar with it. He pointed out that the administration made it clear that the department would work with smaller contractors on the process. He suggested that the committee consider a small amendment to require the administration to conduct outreach to inform contractors about this process and provide them with any assistance needed. He acknowledged that CM/CG would generally be limited to larger, more complex projects.

[2:20:32 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL recalled slides during a presentation discussed using an independent cost estimator. He characterized it as an essential part of the process but he did not see any provision for an independent cost estimator in the bill.

MR. MILLS related his understanding that many aspects would be included in regulations for CM/CG. He assured members that the independent cost estimator would be part of the process.

SENATOR KIEHL said the independent cost estimator was a critical safeguard for the owner so he wants to be sure it is addressed.

2:22:30 PM

CHAIR MYERS opened public testimony on SB 117.

2:22:51 PM

SARAH LEFEBVRE, Office Manager/Contract Administrator, Exclusive Paving, Fairbanks, Alaska, spoke in support of SB 117. She provided her background, such that she has worked in the construction industry for over 20 years. She said she agreed with AGC's testimony.

MS. LEFEBVRE spoke to her experience with the CM/CG process. She said that each proposal is different depending on whether best practices are incorporated into the proposal. From a contractor's perspective, she expected that the largest CM/CG project her company was involved in would provide the best experience. However, that was not the case. She predicted that the inconsistencies and flaws within the process would continue unless legislation were passed. Other than the state's steps to obtain the authority to use the CM/CG procurement method, the state does not have any defined processes. She said CM/CG was being used as a procurement concept. After that, how it was used depended on the specific DOTPF staff involved. Comparing the CM/CG projects from 2012 to 2021, the results would show the process varied widely and the sequence of changes did not track for developing or implementing best practices. Placing CM/CG in statute would create a pathway to develop regulations and clear guidelines to define the process and ensure that the best value was indeed being described and sought on behalf of the state. She said this is crucial to achieving the best competitive environment.

MS. LEFEBVRE explained that contractors must make significant investments for CM/CG projects. In her experience, the internal costs ranged from \$30,000 to \$100,000 for her company to participate in the process. She suggested that the small business amendment would be better addressed by regulation. In closing, she urged members not to delay passing SB 117 for another year. With forthcoming federal funds state infrastructure projects will increase, she said. The CM/CG's procurement method will provide an opportunity for the state to ensure that Alaska can maximize the opportunities to use federal funding. She cautioned that it may take a year to complete the regulation process after passage of SB 117. She said the

construction industry is prepared to actively participate in drafting regulations to ensure that Alaska is a sound platform to build future CM/CG Request for Proposals (RFPs).

[2:25:45 PM](#)

CHAIR MYERS, after first determining no one wished to testify, closed public testimony on SB 117.

[2:26:00 PM](#)

SENATOR SHOWER offered to work with the Chair on an amendment for small businesses.

[2:27:02 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE stated his desire for SB 117 to pass this year.

SENATOR SHOWER offered to make a conceptual amendment.

MR. MILLS interjected that an amendment was not necessary for public outreach. He offered to commit to initiating a public information campaign. Further, he said he had already discussed with Mr. Deininger ways to supplement the process to better inform contractors.

SENATOR SHOWER indicated that he was comfortable with Mr. Mill's commitment.

CHAIR MYERS informed members that HB 160, the companion bill passed the house. He wondered about the process for the companion bill.

SENATOR MICCICHE explained that if SB 117 were to pass, it would meet up with HB 160 in Senate Rules. He expressed concern about any potential delays by holding SB 117 in committee.

CHAIR MYERS said he was comfortable moving SB 117.

SENATOR SHOWER stated that he was comfortable moving SB 117.

[2:30:41 PM](#)

At ease

[2:31:15 PM](#)

CHAIR MYERS reconvened the meeting.

[2:31:23 PM](#)

SENATOR SHOWER moved to report SB 117, work order 32-GS1579\A from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

CHAIR MEYERS found no objection and SB 117 was reported from the Senate Transportation Standing Committee.

**HB 34-NAMING VIETNAM HELI. PILOTS' MEM. BRIDGE**

[2:31:56 PM](#)

CHAIR MYERS announced the consideration of HOUSE BILL NO. 34 "An Act naming the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots' Memorial Bridge."

[2:32:34 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LADDIE SHAW, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of HB 34, stated that he served two tours of duty in Vietnam. He related that he is an associate member of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association as a certified helicopter pilot and a Vietnam veteran. He credited Representative Tilton with the original idea for this bill since the bridge is in her district. However, she allowed him to sponsor HB 34 due to his helicopter pilot experience in Vietnam. He also acknowledged the work on HB 34 by Representative Tilton's staff, Health Hilyard. He informed members that every veteran signed on as a co-sponsor of HB 34.

[2:34:20 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SHAW related one of his personal experiences from his time in Vietnam. He referred to a photograph dated September 20, 1970, identifying the person in the lower right-hand corner of the photograph as himself. The photo emphasized the importance of helicopters to the troops in Vietnam. The Huey helicopter shown arrived within seven minutes and evacuated three of his teammates to Dang, Vietnam, but sadly, two others died. One of the injured teammates was put into an induced coma due to the severity of his wounds. He credited his teammate's survival to the radio strapped on his back and the quick evacuation. Thirty-seven years later, he crossed paths with this friend, who recovered from his injuries and worked 20 years in law enforcement. He retired as Chief of Police in Horseheads, New York.

REPRESENTATIVE SHAW said he previously served as the Military and Veterans Affairs director. He reviewed several peaks in the Chugach Mountains that were named in honor of veterans, including Mount POW/MIA and Gold Star Peak. Both of those peaks look down on the bridge that HB 34 proposes to name.

[2:36:27 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SHAW emphasized the value of honoring these helicopter pilots. He noted that the bill carries a small fiscal note.

[2:37:18 PM](#)

JOSH WALTON, Staff, Representative Laddie Shaw, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, stated that HB 34 would name bridges 1124 and 1889 the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots' Memorial Bridge. He explained that these bridges span both the north and southbound bridges over the Matanuska River at mile 30.4 of the Glenn Highway. He stated that anyone who travels from Anchorage to the Mat-Su Valley crosses over one of these bridges. He noted that members' packets contain photos of the bridges. He referred to a 1994 article, "The Coming of Age: The Role of the Helicopter in the Vietnam War," which characterized the Vietnam conflict as the first actual helicopter conflict. Several other articles emphasize the heroism of helicopter pilots, including a September 15, 2016, Time magazine article and a September 2015 Air & Space Magazine article, he said. He reviewed additional support for the bill.

[2:39:46 PM](#)

LYNN KILE, President, Vietnam Helicopter Pilot Association (VHPA), Anchorage, Alaska, stated that he is a Vietnam veteran. He stated that VHPA's membership in Alaska consists of 85 pilots and crewmembers. He estimated an additional 300 pilots live in Alaska but he was unsure of the number of crewmembers in the state.

MR. KILE said the story Representative Shaw mentioned was just one of many experienced by helicopter crews and pilots. The medevac helicopters flew over 500,000 missions evacuating over 900,000 soldiers and troops with an 82 percent survival rate. From logistics to medical evacuations, helicopter pilots flew thousands of missions. He said he is honored that the committee is taking up this bill. Naming these bridges represents a small token of thanks to honor the contributions these helicopter pilots made to the state and nation. He recalled that veterans did not receive a warm welcome home like WWI or WWII veterans did so now is the time to honor their contributions and sacrifices made to the nation and state by the dedication of these small landmark bridges over the Matanuska River. This landmark memorial will remind those who see it of the trials and tribulations of the Vietnam conflict and to honor those who dedicated their skills to our state and country.

[2:42:24 PM](#)

SENATOR SHOWER thanked the sponsor for introducing the bill. He said his father-in-law served three tours of duty in Vietnam; and half of his academy class died in Vietnam. Further, his son was airlifted in Iraq due to significant injuries he sustained. He acknowledged the importance of helicopter evacuation because treatment can begin on board. This bill is important because the Vietnam veterans served their country but were often disrespected, he said.

[2:44:55 PM](#)

At ease

[2:45:15 PM](#)

CHAIR MYERS reconvened the meeting.

[2:45:23 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL said it was his privilege to work in civilian life under four Vietnam veterans. He stated that he learned about duty and hard work from them but it cannot begin to compare with the comments and service of Senator Shower and the sponsor of the bill. He thanked them for their service.

[2:46:11 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE said he was honored to support HB 34. He stated that when he worked offshore in Cook Inlet he relied on helicopters. He commended the skills of the helicopter pilots who helped many survive the Vietnam War.

[2:47:24 PM](#)

CHAIR MYERS opened public testimony on HB 34 and after first determining no one wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 34.

[2:47:48 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE referred to the fiscal notes. He acknowledged the importance of respecting the fiscal note on bills. However, he related his understanding that bridge signs are often taken out by snowblowers, car crashes or wear and tear so replacing signs was common. Thus, he said he grapples to understand the necessity for a fiscal note to replace this sign when the department will need to replace it at some point and the sign honoring these veterans seems worthy, he said.

[2:49:00 PM](#)

MR. MILLS agreed that signs are replaced but he was not certain of the mechanism to do so. He said the department provided the sponsor's office with several options. The fundamental issue of zeroing out a fiscal note was that it would escalate the number of requests to rename bridges and require numerous new signs. He related his understanding that the Department of Administration has a specialty plate mechanism whereby the costs are paid by user fees. He suggested that a similar concept could be worked out. The department cannot pursue it within this legislature's timeframe given that the legislative session was nearly over. He stated that the department believes in equal treatment but would like to address this at a later date.

SENATOR MICCICHE said he hopes the legislature could create a method for people to donate privately. He said he understands how important it is for people to do so.

SENATOR SHOWER also offered his support to find a way to get receipt authority so those who wished to cover the cost of signs could do so.

[2:53:11 PM](#)

SENATOR SHOWER moved to report HB 34, work order 32-LS0265\A, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

CHAIR MEYERS found no objection and HB 34 was reported from the Senate Transportation Standing Committee.

[2:53:56 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Meyers adjourned the Senate Transportation Standing Committee meeting at 2:53 p.m.