

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE

May 8, 2025

1:06 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Ashley Carrick, Co-Chair
Representative Ted Eischeid, Co-Chair
Representative Genevieve Mina
Representative Louise Stutes
Representative Kevin McCabe
Representative Cathy Tilton
Representative Elexie Moore

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 136

"An Act relating to use of railroad easements."

- MOVED CSHB 136(TRA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 217

"An Act regulating autonomous vehicles; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PRESENTATION: HIGHWAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

- HEARD

HOUSE BILL NO. 167

"An Act renaming Ruby Airport as Harold Esmailka Airport; and providing for an effective date."

- REMOVED FROM AGENDA

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 136

SHORT TITLE: RAILROAD UTILITY CORRIDORS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) KOPP

03/14/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/14/25 (H) TRA, JUD
04/01/25 (H) TRA AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124
04/01/25 (H) Heard & Held
04/01/25 (H) MINUTE (TRA)
05/06/25 (H) TRA AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124
05/06/25 (H) Heard & Held
05/06/25 (H) MINUTE (TRA)
05/08/25 (H) TRA AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124

BILL: HB 217

SHORT TITLE: AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

SPONSOR(s): TRANSPORTATION

05/02/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
05/02/25 (H) TRA, CRA
05/08/25 (H) TRA AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE CHUCK KOPP
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, provided a brief overview of CSHB 136, Version H, and answered questions on the proposed amendments.

MEGHAN CLEMANS, External Affairs Director
Alaska Railroad Corporation
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions on the proposed amendments to CSHB 136, Version H.

ANDY MILLS, Legislative Liaison, Special Assistant
Office of the Commissioner
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on CSHB 136, Version H, and during the Highway Safety Improvement Plan presentation.

MEREDITH TRAINOR, Staff
Representative Ted Eischeid
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: On behalf of the sponsor, the House Transportation Standing Committee, of which Representative Eischeid co-chaired, gave a PowerPoint on HB 217.

PAM GOLDEN, State Traffic and Safety Engineer
Statewide Design and Engineering Services
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Highway Safety Improvement Plan update.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:06:34 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CARRICK called the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:06 p.m. Representatives Moore, Tilton, Mina, McCabe, Eischeid, and Carrick were present at the call to order. Representative Stutes arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 136-RAILROAD UTILITY CORRIDORS

[1:07:26 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CARRICK announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 136, "An Act relating to use of railroad easements." [Before the committee, passed on 05/06/25, was the proposed committee substitute (CS) for HB 136, Version 34-LS0640\H, Walsh, 4/28/25, ("Version H").

[1:08:04 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CHUCK KOPP, Alaska State Legislature, stated that CSHB 136, Version H, would affirm the state's right and the state's obligation to set policy for the management of the Alaska Railroad easements. He reasoned that because the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) is state owned, the state holds the authority to determine the usage of the railroad right-of-way. He explained that Version H is about the balance between the operational needs of the railroad and those Alaskans who own the land beneath the easement. He stated that the proposed bill would reaffirm usage of the right-of-way by property owners, as long as the usage would not unreasonably interfere with railroad operations. He gave a brief overview of the court cases affirming this standard.

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP acknowledged the concern that the proposed legislation could preclude the railroad's ability to authorize public trails along the right-of-way. He pointed out that an amendment has clarified this issue. He added that public trail approval is addressed by a different piece of proposed legislation, HB 142. He maintained that Version H would not interfere with ARRC's ability to coordinate with state or local governments and public works; however, it would set a clear policy for those who own land under the easement. He stated that the proposed bill is about respect for private property and urged the committee's support.

[1:10:48 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA moved to adopt Amendment 1 to CSHB 136, labeled 34-LS0640\H.5, Walsh, 5/7/25, which read as follows:

Page 2, line 8:

Delete "The corporation shall allow"

Insert "(a) Except as provided in (b) of this section, the corporation may not charge a fee or require a permit for"

Page 2, following line 10:

Insert a new subsection to read:

"(b) The corporation may require the owner of real property subject to an easement in favor of the corporation to obtain a permit from the corporation to construct a railroad crossing within the easement and may charge the owner a revenue-neutral fee associated with issuing the permit and developing and maintaining the crossing."

CO-CHAIR CARRICK objected for the purpose of discussion.

REPRESENTATIVE MINA explained that Amendment 1 is in response to the discussion concerning ARRC's ability to charge fees in the future. She stated that Version H would codify the railroad's current process, while the amendment would assure property owners that they are not charged fees on easement usage, even if ARRC changes its leadership. She pointed out that the policy of revenue-neutral crossings would continue. She said she had worked with the bill sponsor and ARRC to develop the amendment. She added that the amendment would ensure the proposed legislation would be about property rights, and not trail issues.

[1:12:37 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE discussed the need for a conceptual amendment to Amendment 1. He pointed out that Amendment 1 would deal with fees and permits that AARC could charge property owners. Following this same logic, the prospective conceptual amendment to Amendment 1 would apply to fees charged to state agencies and public utilities. He argued that a state-owned corporation should not be able to charge state agencies, as this would only shift public dollars from one agency to another.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE continued that the conceptual amendment would add a new subsection to prohibit ARRC from charging state agencies or public utilities fees to use railway utility corridors. He reasoned that Amendment 1 would be addressing fees; therefore, this would be the time to create the language. For example, he noted that the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) and the Matanuska Electrical Association (MEA) are both paying fees to the railroad to use the right-of-way. He maintained that the conceptual amendment would stop the shifting of the state's money.

[1:14:56 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE moved to adopt Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 1. He explained that this would insert a new subsection in Amendment 1, following subsection (b), and it would read, "The corporation may not charge a state agency or public utility a fee to use a railway utility corridor."

CO-CHAIR CARRICK objected for the purpose of discussion.

[1:15:20 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 1:15 p.m. to 1:17 p.m.

[1:17:55 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA expressed appreciation, as ARRC's fees should be transparent; however, she expressed opposition to Conceptual Amendment 1. She argued that it does not belong in the proposed amendment. She explained that the intent of the proposed legislation would be to codify the Alaska Railroad's current practices. She surmised that Amendment 1 would assuage property owners, who feel they may be charged in the future by the railroad for access to their property on the right-of-way.

She reasoned that Conceptual Amendment 1 would create a new policy, which would not reflect the current policy.

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CO-CHAIR CARRICK requested comments from ARRC.

[1:19:16 PM](#)

MEGHAN CLEMANS, External Affairs Director, Alaska Railroad Corporation, concerning Conceptual Amendment 1, pointed out that there are real expenses associated with rail crossings. She acknowledged that the railroad could not block railroad-crossing access across the state; however, she pointed out that rail crossings are a burden to the rail system. She explained that it is a standard in the railroad business for users to assume the cost and maintenance of crossings, because crossings are a benefit to the users, but a burden to the railroad. She pointed out that in 1988 a policy was created between ARRC and DOT&PF. This policy covers new applications for road crossings, diagnostics, and the entities sharing the expense.

MS. CLEMANS stated that it would be a concern for ARRC to assume all the expenses for rail crossings. She maintained that the crossing program has been designed to be revenue neutral, as it is not a profit source. She emphasized that there are real expenses in building the railroad infrastructure and meeting the regulatory requirements, which are the expenses passed along to users.

CO-CHAIR CARRICK requested an estimate of state agency fees and public utility fees taken in by ARRC.

MS. CLEMANS responded that she does not have current numbers available, but expressed the understanding that in 2022, from a real estate perspective, the railroad took in around \$82,000 in fees, and from an annual signal maintenance perspective, it took in around \$250,000 in fees.

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REPRESENTATIVE STUTES questioned the basis of the fees. She expressed the understanding that it would be the railroad's actual expense to maintain the crossings.

MS. CLEMANS answered in the affirmative. She explained that ARRC fees would include internal administrative time, such as

reporting to the Federal Railroad Administration. Track and crossing inspections would also be included in the fees, and she pointed out that these occur throughout the year, with crossing inspections occurring more frequently. She added that incidental crossing costs would be covered under annual permit fees. She stated that the study by the diagnostic team is an expensive process, which could involve ARRC, DOT&PF, municipalities, school districts, and law enforcement. These studies would involve determining the new location of a crossing and the type of crossing. She stated that a study could cost over \$10,000, adding that the railroad attempts to inform applicants of this cost when the applications are made.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES acknowledged that a [1988] agreement already exists between DOT&PF and ARRC. She questioned the appropriateness of the legislature to "get in the middle of it." She requested that ARRC report back to the committee the actual revenue it is receiving.

[1:26:08 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE questioned the yearly maintenance cost of a utility that is buried alongside the railroad. He referred to a conversation with ENSTAR Natural Gas Company about the cost of putting a pipeline along the railroad in Port MacKenzie. He questioned the maintenance cost of an already buried pipeline along the railroad. He opined that it would need no maintenance.

MS. CLEMANS responded that for fees for utilities, ARRC uses the [statutory-mandated] model for a self-sustaining corporation. She stated that in this case a fee for longitudinal utility lines would be charged and rolled into ARRC's real estate revenue; however, maintenance fees would be charged on a revenue-neutral basis, which can include reimbursable costs.

[1:28:43 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE expressed the concern that, through utilities and state agencies, the railroad would be charging Alaskans for the use of the land they own. He explained that this is the reasoning behind the conceptual amendment.

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REPRESENTATIVE STUTES noted that ENSTAR is a private corporation and agreed that it should be charged. She questioned whether ARRC's financial information is available to the public.

MS. CLEMANS responded that ARRC's financials are available in its annual report.

[1:31:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP expressed appreciation for Amendment 1 and Conceptual Amendment 1. Concerning the rate that utilities pay for corridor usage, he pointed out ENSTAR and MEA have both commented on ARRC's [high] rates. He expressed the understanding that ENSTAR "pays more for one mile of access to the right-of-way" than it does for "the other 800 miles of pipeline right-of-way in Alaska." He expressed the understanding that the conceptual amendment would provide a check and balance of the rate structures. He suggested that DOT&PF pays around \$1.6 million in fees to the railroad because of crossings.

[1:33:43 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE reasoned that because ENSTAR is a private utility company, costs would be passed to Alaskans via a rate increase. He expressed the understanding that these rates could not be negotiated.

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CO-CHAIR EISCHEID expressed confusion on the difference in the costs that have been quoted. He expressed interest in seeing the [1988] agreement, the numbers printed out, and testimony from DOT&PF and ENSTAR. Without these conversations, he stated that he could not support the conceptual amendment.

[1:35:30 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES concurred with the basis of the conceptual amendment; however, the [1988] agreement between the state and the railroad needs to be understood. She expressed uncertainty on the "fallout" from Amendment 1 with Conceptual Amendment 1.

[1:36:12 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CARRICK expressed support for the "spirit" of the amendment, and she expressed concern on the amount of the fees

discussed. She questioned the details of the charges, especially concerning the utilities. She stated that without having this information, she would be unable to decide on the [conceptual] amendment. She questioned DOT&PF concerning the fees it pays to ARRC.

[1:37:15 PM](#)

ANDY MILLS, Legislative Liaison, Special Assistant, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, responded that from fiscal year 21 (FY21) to FY25, the railroad charged DOT&PF \$1.6 million for the Northern Region. He noted that he could also provide the Central Region's fee. He continued that DOT&PF has been charged annual railroad-signal maintenance fees of around \$500,000. He suggested that the conversations on the different fees should be kept separate.

[1:38:14 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE noted the 1988 agreement between the railroad and DOT&PF. He questioned whether this had to do with signal maintenance and road crossings, but not with right-of-way fees.

MR. MILLS expressed uncertainty on this, and he offered to follow up with the information after the meeting.

[1:39:06 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE expressed the desire to not "torpedo" or delay the proposed legislation with the conceptual amendment. He questioned the will of the committee.

CO-CHAIR CARRICK suggested that he withdraw the conceptual amendment, as more information would be necessary to continue the discussion. She maintained her objection to Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 1.

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REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE moved to withdraw Conceptual Amendment 1, to Amendment 1. There being no objection, Conceptual Amendment 1 was withdrawn.

[1:40:45 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP expressed appreciation for Amendment 1 to Version H. He noted the previous testimony of a landowner who has a private rail crossing, and he pointed out the many homes in Seward with private rail crossings. He expressed the understanding that these landowners are paying \$1,000 a year in fees to ARRC. He expressed disbelief that this amount would be "revenue neutral," as these fees are onerous to the landowners. He expressed support for Amendment 1, and he questioned the definition of "revenue neutral."

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CO-CHAIR CARRICK withdrew her objection to Amendment 1. There being no further objection, Amendment 1 was adopted.

[1:43:11 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CARRICK expressed her appreciation for the proposed bill and the stakeholder discussion that ensued. She pointed out the public comments concerning land management around the railroad right-of-way, as there appears to be a need for classification.

[1:44:31 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA thanked the bill sponsor, and she thanked the public advocates for their input. She reiterated that the discussion on the rights of property owners is important. She pointed out the discussion is not only about trails, but it is also about fees and reconciling the differences between the railroad and property owners.

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CO-CHAIR EISCHEID expressed appreciation for the robust discussion that the proposed legislation created. He noted that the process has been educational, and the history is interesting in terms of the distrust it has created. He expressed appreciation for the consideration for the committee substitute, which recognizes potential trail usage in the right-of-way. He recognized that the proposed legislation is not "a trail's issue." He also pointed out the importance of definitions in all legislation.

[1:47:40 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 1:47 p.m. to 1:48 p.m.

[1:48:30 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES moved to report CSHB 136, Version 34-LS0640\H, Walsh, 4/28/25, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSHB 136(TRA) was reported out of the House Transportation Standing Committee.

[1:49:00 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 1:49 p.m. to 1:56 p.m.

HB 217-AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

[1:56:56 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CARRICK announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 217, "An Act regulating autonomous vehicles; and providing for an effective date."

[1:57:20 PM](#)

MEREDITH TRAINOR, Staff, Representative Ted Eischeid, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of the sponsor, the House Transportation Standing Committee, of which Representative Eischeid co-chaired, gave a PowerPoint on HB 217 [hard copy included in the committee packet]. She stated that HB 217 is a companion bill to SB 148. She stated that HB 217 would add language and regulations on the definition of "autonomous vehicles" to statute for the first time. She began on slide 2, stating that the proposed bill would establish requirements on autonomous vehicles used for interstate commerce, shipping of commercial goods, and passenger transport. For these uses, she stated that the proposed legislation would require a human-safety operator, who meets federal and state requirements for autonomous and non-autonomous operation. She stated that the operator must be present in order to operate or turn off the vehicle. She added that this would not address personal and noncommercial purposes, but these operators would still need to meet the same federal and state requirements.

MS. TRAINOR stated that the proposed legislation would also establish guidelines for owner and user liability, with allowances for accidents caused by software or hardware malfunctions. She stated that the proposed bill also would

establish new definitions related to autonomous vehicle technology and functions, as seen on slide 3.

[1:59:49 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR EISCHEID questioned whether Ms. Trainor has had any experience with a self-driving vehicle.

MS. TRAINOR responded that while she was in a Tesla, the driver had put the car in the self-driving function and the car navigated a roundabout. In response to a follow-up question, she stated that the car had rubbed against the curb and the driving was imprecise.

CO-CHAIR EISCHEID expressed the importance of the proposed legislation, as it would require a driver onboard to take control.

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REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE questioned having an operator in an autonomous vehicle, as it would defeat the purpose. He also questioned the definition of "interstate commerce," concerning the difference with "intrastate commerce." He opined whether drone usage would be covered under the proposed legislation. He pointed out that driving in snowy conditions could present a problem. He surmised that a presentation, possibly from a manufacturer, would be helpful.

CO-CHAIR CARRICK expressed agreement on the need for a presentation. Concerning the rapid pace of technology, she questioned the development of autonomous vehicles and whether a driver would always be needed.

[2:04:23 PM](#)

MS. TRAINOR responded by pointing out the importance of defining "autonomous vehicle" in statute, as there is no definition for this in the motor vehicle statute. She pointed out that the usage of these vehicles has increased, and this is a concern considering the importance of shipping in the state. She opined that there could be a point in the future when a human-safety operator would not be needed.

[2:05:35 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TILTON discussed her son's Tesla, which has the capability to drive on its own. She described her experience in the car. She said, "It has done a fine job of driving itself." She added that when she was in the vehicle, her son was there, and this had made her more "comfortable."

[2:07:25 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CARRICK questioned whether other states with this type of legislation would have requirements for a driver's level of awareness.

MS. TRAINOR expressed uncertainty, and she offered to follow up with an answer.

[2:08:22 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE conjectured how this would affect a charge of driving under the influence.

[2:08:58 PM](#)

MS. TRAINOR stated that the proposed bill would require safety operators to meet federal and state requirements for operating autonomous and nonautonomous vehicles, and this would cover a driving under the influence charge.

[2:09:33 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA noted a letter in opposition from the Alliance for Automotive Innovation, which concerned the lack of references to the National Society of Automotive Engineers' (SAE's) definitions. She questioned whether this concern has been raised.

MS. TRAINOR responded that she has looked at SAE standards, which define incremental increases in the level of automation. Except for the letter in question, she stated there has been no other voiced concerns about SAE standards. She suggested that this could be addressed in the future.

[2:10:45 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CARRICK addressed her earlier question concerning a driver's level of awareness. She read from the section of the proposed legislation addressing this and expressed the

understanding that an operator would need to be as alert and aware as a person driving a nonelectric vehicle.

[2:11:26 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA pointed out that the Alliance for Automotive Innovation's letter also expressed concern that the presumption of liability would always be on the human-safety operator, as this would not be congruent with other legislation concerning tort law.

MS. TRAINOR responded that the current version of the proposed legislation gives the primary responsibility to the operator, and then it progresses to the maker of the vehicle through four steps. She expressed the understanding that, under normal tort law, the driver has the initial liability, and then any issues with the manufacturing of the vehicle could shift responsibility. She suggested that this part of the bill language could be eliminated, as the same parties would be responsible in the same order. She opined that this could be a redundancy issue in the language of the proposed legislation.

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CO-CHAIR CARRICK announced that HB 217 was held over.

[2:13:54 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 2:13 p.m. to 2:16 p.m.

PRESENTATION: Highway Safety Improvement Plan Update

[2:16:52 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CARRICK announced that the final order of business would be a presentation on the Highway Safety Improvement Plan update.

[2:17:24 PM](#)

PAM GOLDEN, State Traffic and Safety Engineer, Statewide Design and Engineering Services, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Highway Safety Improvement Plan (HSIP) [hard copy included in the committee packet]. She began the presentation on slide 2 and briefly spoke about the history of HSIP. She stated that the primary purpose of HSIP is to reduce traffic fatalities and

serious injuries on all public roads. She stated that HSIP consists of three main components: the Strategic Highway Safety Plan, highway safety improvement projects, and the Railway-Highway Crossing Program. She stated that, at the federal level, HSIP is required to be a data driven program.

MS. GOLDEN pointed out that the federal code determines the types of projects that can be funded by HSIP, as seen on slide 3. These projects include construction, data analysis, vehicle technology, road safety, and transportation safety planning. She stated that the recent Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act allows for 10 percent of apportionment to be spent on projects that support safety, such as education, law enforcement, emergency medical services, safety research, and non-infrastructure safe routes for school activities.

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MS. GOLDEN moved to slide 4 and addressed HSIP funding. She stated that \$1.2 million is dedicated to railroad crossings. She explained that the Alaska Railroad Corporation supplies a list of projects to DOT&PF, and these two entities work together to support the projects. She continued, stating that the regular uncategorized funds have a 10 percent match. Addressing the penalty for vulnerable road users, she said this is triggered when the fatality rate in the state is above 15 percent. She noted that the funding for this is around \$6.4 million. She addressed the penalty funds, which are financial penalties from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for noncompliance with federal safety and infrastructure standards, such as the federal standards for open container and repeat offender laws. She stated that this totals around \$26.6 million.

[2:22:21 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR EISCHEID questioned the definition of "vulnerable road user," and he questioned the number of these fatalities in the state.

MS. GOLDEN, in response, defined "vulnerable road user" as those using the transportation system by either walking or rolling, such as pedestrians, bicyclists, rollerbladers, and skaters. She estimated that last year there had been around 15 vulnerable road-user fatalities and up to 55 total road-user fatalities. She added that the vulnerable road-user penalty has already been triggered for the current year.

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REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE questioned whether those riding electric bikes would be considered vulnerable road users.

MS. GOLDEN expressed the understanding that they would be included.

CO-CHAIR CARRICK suggested that Representative McCabe's question was rhetorical. She questioned whether there are any federal or state definitions for electric bikes.

MS. GOLDEN expressed uncertainty, adding that the Municipality of Anchorage does have rules. She noted that there are questions about electric bikes, all-terrain vehicles, and golf carts in other states. She said, "That is something we're all sort of figuring out as we go."

[2:25:15 PM](#)

MS. GOLDEN addressed the creation of HSIP projects. On slide 5, she noted that the Alaska Highway Safety Improvement Program Handbook would be updated with every funding bill. She pointed out that the handbook updates each region's process. She discussed the process of determining patterns for crashes in the state. To get beyond traditional data, she said that crowd-source data and speed data would be examined.

MS. GOLDEN moved to slide 6 and discussed safety countermeasures. She stated that once crash patterns are determined, proven countermeasures for crash reductions are examined. She pointed out FHWA's 28 proven counter measures, and she discussed the Crash Modification Factor tool, which is a clearinghouse for crash data research. The verification of countermeasures would be included in this as well. She discussed how countermeasures are determined, which includes the context of the location, a review of existing planning documents, and coordination with local governments.

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CO-CHAIR EISCHEID directed attention to data from other states concerning vulnerable user laws. He questioned whether there is any data showing the effectiveness of these laws, especially concerning the reduction of vulnerable user accidents.

MS. GOLDEN, in response, expressed uncertainty. She stated that she would follow up to the committee after making inquiries.

2:30:21 PM

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE directed attention to countermeasure efforts and the coordination with local governments. He stated that he has two local governments in his district that are not part of Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and both have requested a lower speed limit on sections of the Parks Highway. He questioned whether these requests would go through HSIP.

MS. GOLDEN, in response, stated that speed-reduction requests along the Parks Highway would go through the regional office. In response to a follow-up question on whether this would be a countermeasure, she pointed out the complexity of changing speed limits within sections of a road. She explained that changing a speed limit without the presence of law enforcement, or a major change to the road, would not always result in drivers changing their behavior, as signs do not always work. She stated that a law enforcement presence is what helps in the "routine education of drivers in the area."

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MS. GOLDEN moved to slide 7 and pointed out the safety flares made to support first responders and emergency medical services. She stated that once a project has been selected in the statewide program, funding is applied to what can be delivered fastest and most effectively with the funding available.

MS. GOLDEN moved to slide 8 and discussed project development and delivery. She stated that once a project is approved, regions would do the design and construction activities, including public involvement. However, sometimes the scope would need to change, such as when a better project arises, or another option is realized. When this happens, the project is renominated and reprioritized for funding. She stated that the program must evaluate its performance, and once three years of post-construction crash data is available, a final benefit-cost calculation for the project is made. This would then be reported to FHWA. She expressed pride that, as of 2024, Alaska HSIP projects have an average benefit-cost ratio of six to one for money spent.

2:35:51 PM

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES commented on a situation in Kodiak, where DOT&PF repeatedly refills gravel in a particularly large pothole, instead of doing a repair. She expressed concern that the hole is big, and, if a car goes into the hole or swerves to miss it, someone could be hurt. She questioned why this could not be repaired.

MS. GOLDEN responded that HSIP does not make repairs on public roads, as the program is restricted from doing routine maintenance. She stated that it could make upgrades to roads, suggesting that sometimes an upgrade could be used strategically to help a repair.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES questioned which agency could do the repair.

[2:37:56 PM](#)

ANDY MILLS, Legislative Liaison, Special Assistant, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, expressed appreciation for the question. He stated that funding these repairs illustrates a fundamental challenge for the department. He explained that federal funds are restricted and often cannot go towards maintenance and repair; therefore, road repairs would be exclusively state funded. He pointed out that state funding for repairs has been reduced or flat over the past decade, and in the current budget, there are reductions. He concurred that upgrade projects could address underlying issues with roads; however, this could take years.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES reiterated the significance of the pothole.

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CO-CHAIR EISCHEID expressed the understanding that the federal dollars the state receives would help build new roads, but once the roads are built, the state would do the maintenance and repair.

MR. MILLS expressed agreement with the statement, and he pointed out that this is why the governor and the legislature have "grappled" with the motor fuel tax. He stated that the tax is an example of a user fee. He pointed out the rising use of electric vehicles and explained that they are heavier and wear more on the road; however, this usage does not contribute to the

fuel tax, which pays for road repairs. He indicated that this would be a larger, different conversation.

[2:41:59 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA questioned HSIP's role in Anchorage's protected bike lanes.

MS. GOLDEN responded that these lanes were created through a research program.

[2:42:27 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CARRICK made closing comments.

[2:43:22 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR EISCHEID made closing comments. For the record, he thanked Co-Chair Carrick for her mentorship.

CO-CHAIR CARRICK thanked the legislative staff.

[2:44:44 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:44 p.m.