

Idaho Transportation Board

129,000 Pound Truck Route Subcommittee

January 21, 2015

Idaho Transportation Board (ITB) 129,000 Pound Truck Route Subcommittee Chairman Jim Kempton called the meeting to order at 8 AM on Wednesday, January 21 in Room 200 at the Idaho Transportation Department, Boise, Idaho. ITB Members Jan Vassar and Julie DeLorenzo were present. ITB Vice Chairman Jim Coleman participated via teleconference.

Subcommittee staff members and advisors in attendance included Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Larry Allen, Chief Engineer (CE) Dave Jones, Highway Safety Manager (HSM) Brent Jennings, Public Involvement Coordinator (PIC) Adam Rush, Motor Vehicle Administrator Alan Frew, Vehicle Size and Weight Specialist (VS&WS) Reggie Phipps, Bridge Management Engineer Dan Gorley, District 3 Engineer Amy Revis, District 3 Operations Manager (D3OM) Jason Brinkman, and Executive Assistant to the Board (EAB) Sue Higgins. Randy Shroll from the Department of Commerce participated via teleconference and District 2 Engineering Manager Doral Hoff participated via video conference.

Scott Ellsworth, Local Highway Technical Assistance Council, and Julie Pipal, Idaho Trucking Association, were also present.

August 25, 2014 Meeting Minutes. Chairman Kempton noted that the minutes of the August 25, 2014 meeting were distributed earlier, and, upon concurrence of the Subcommittee, were finalized and posted on the website. Without objection, those minutes will stand.

Case #201407: US-95, Milepost (MP) 63.051 to 240.273, Fruitland to Grangeville. CE Jones said the Division of Motor Vehicles confirmed that the route falls under either the blue routes category allowing 95-foot overall vehicle length and a 5.5-foot off-track or a red route, allowing 115-foot overall vehicle length and a 6.5-foot off-track. The permitting process would determine if vehicle combinations can legally operate on the route. The bridge analyses determined that the 56 bridges on the route will safely support vehicle combinations of 129,000 pounds, assuming the axle configuration conforms to the legal requirements.

CE Jones summarized District 3's analysis of US-95 from MP 63.051 to 182.415. The roadway is generally in good condition; however, there are some deficient pavement areas. Two 90-degree corners in Council limit off-tracking ability for trucks, but they will be eliminated by a realignment project scheduled for construction in 2016. There are some roadway geometric challenges due to narrow shoulders, tight curves, and rock slopes that limit off-tracking, but they will also be remediated by projects scheduled for construction in 2016. Port of entry (POE) staff noted that the roving POE sites may have difficulty accommodating 129,000 pound vehicle combinations if several trucks visit the site at the same time.

District 2 analyzed the route from MP 182.415 to 240.273. CE Jones reported that the road is in good condition from an operation stand point. There are adequate POE locations along the route to monitor commercial vehicle compliance.

According to the analysis, CE Jones said safety should not be impacted on the route. From 2009 through 2013, there was a total of 853 crashes along the route resulting in 24 fatalities. The crash rate on the District 2 section is 42% lower than the average rate of similar sections of roadway. On the District 3 section, four of the 15 fatal crashes, or 27%, involved tractor-trailer combinations. Only 40 of the 619 total crashes, or 6%, involved commercial vehicles.

The public comment period was held from December 5 to January 5 with public hearings held in Riggins and Payette. PIC Rush said 16 comments were received with 5 in support of the request, 5 opposed, and 6 neutral. The negative comments related to concerns with expected degradation of the highway, safety of school children in Weiser, congestion, risks from improperly maintained vehicles, and narrow and curvy sections of the highway.

CE Jones believes all of the concerns can be adequately addressed. The additional axles on these vehicles spread the weight so the highway should not be degraded. The axles also have brakes, which should address some of the safety concerns. It is hard to gauge additional congestion because trucks hauling at 129,000 pounds will presumably result in fewer trucks on the highway. There may be a concern with motorists coming up behind a truck that may be difficult to pass; however, CE Jones believes there are adequate passing opportunities along the route. Regarding the narrow and curvy sections, several projects are programmed to improve the geometrics. He acknowledged that not all of these sections can be improved at this time due to limited funds.

Based on the analyses, CE Jones recommends approving the US-95 route request from Fruitland to Grangeville, MP 63.051 to 240.273.

Member DeLorenzo asked for more information on the safety concerns. CE Jones believes the school safety issues have been adequately addressed in Payette, Weiser, and Council via lower speed limits, traffic signals, good signage, and crosswalks.

HSM Jennings said District 3 should consider performing a safety audit on this corridor, although that action would not necessarily be tied to this route request.

Member Kempton asked if ABS brakes are required on commercial vehicles. VS&WS Phipps replied that the permit requires the vehicle to meet federal requirements. One of those requirements is brakes on all axles; however, it does not specify the type of brakes.

In response to Member Coleman's question on the percentage of trucks on the route, D3OM Brinkman replied that commercial vehicles comprise 5% to 15% of the traffic in District 3, depending on the location.

EAB Higgins relayed Trucking Advisory Council Chairman John Pocock's regrets that he could not attend the meeting; however, he reviewed the information and supports the request.

Member DeLorenzo made a motion to approve the Chief Engineer's recommendation on US-95, MP 63.051 to 240.273 and to send this request to the full Board for consideration of approval. Member Vassar seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Chairman Kempton said the request will be presented to the Board for consideration at its February meeting.

In response to Member DeLorenzo's question, CE Jones replied that there are no other requests pending. Member Vassar asked about local requests. CE Jones said not all of the local routes related to the designation of US-95 from Grangeville to Lewiston have been approved. He met with LHTAC to determine if ITD could provide additional assistance and he will make a concerted effort to help.

Discussion followed on the Department's assistance to local jurisdictions, with overall support for ITD to help more. Member Kempton believes it would be helpful to follow up with locals that have received 129,000 pound truck route requests; however, he added that the requestor also has a responsibility to work with the local highway jurisdiction. Mr. Ellsworth mentioned the various outreach LHTAC has conducted on this subject. Based on his observations at public hearings, CE Jones believes more education is needed. He believes conducting joint hearings would be of value to the local highway jurisdictions.

DAG Allen cautioned that the legislation is clear that ITD is not to interfere with the locals' efforts or approve local routes.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 AM.

signed

Respectfully submitted by:
SUE S. HIGGINS
Executive Assistant & Secretary
Idaho Transportation Board