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Sen. Michael Delph
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Sen. Vi Simpson
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JOINT STUDY COMMITTEE ON MASS TRANSIT AND TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

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MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: August 20, 2008
Meeting Time: 10:00 A.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington St., Room 404
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 1

Members Present: Sen. Thomas Wyss, Co-Chairperson; Sen. James Merritt; Sen. Vaneta Becker; Sen. Phil Boots; Sen. Michael Delph; Sen. Ed Charbonneau; Sen. Earline Rogers; Sen. James Lewis; Sen. Jean Breaux; Rep. Terri Austin, Co-Chairperson; Rep. Robert Bischoff; Rep. Sandra Blanton; Rep. Nancy Dembowski; Rep. Phil Pflum; Rep. Vern Tincher; Rep. Cleo Duncan; Rep. William Davis; Rep. Thomas Saunders; Rep. Ed Soliday; Rep. Heath VanNatter.

Members Absent: Sen. Allen Paul; Sen. Vi Simpson; Rep. David Niezgodski.

¹ Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.in.gov/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

I. Call to Order and Introduction of Members

Senator Wyss called the meeting to order at 10:09 a.m. and the committee members introduced themselves.

II. Public Testimony

Liz Solberg expressed her thanks to the committee for its work and encouraged its continued exploration of mass transit and commuter rail alternatives as part of an integrated transportation system. See Exhibit A.

Thom Davis advocated for the adoption of a systems level approach to Indiana's mass transit problem. See Exhibit B. Beth Lunik testified that a good mass transit system enhances quality of life and attracts good jobs to the area.

Roger Hollands testified on behalf of the Anderson-Muncie Commuter Rail Coalition and in support of the development of a commuter rail system to expand economic development opportunities and improve the quality of life in central Indiana. See Exhibit C.

Katia Satterfield stated that a comprehensive mass transit system would strengthen Indiana's economy. Tiffany Nichols expressed her support for mass transit on both economic and environmental grounds and asked the committee to consider mass transit an investment rather than a cost. Maggie Baber testified about the need for mass transit in Indiana's rural communities.

Steve Keltner agreed with the need for mass transit and testified that any mass transit plan should include an infrastructure component as well as a method to pay for the plan that does not impose too great a burden on taxpayers.

Sheah Hilton testified that she lives in a growing community that needs mass transit to connect to Indianapolis and central Indiana for employment and recreational opportunities. Joan Jones testified that any mass transit plan must be accountable to the taxpayers that fund the system. Sarah Batto testified that Indianapolis is a less economically feasible place to live and work because it does not have a mass transit infrastructure.

III. Transportation Studies - SEA 205-2007

Brian Piascik of URSCorporation and John Meyers of HNTB testified before the committee on the mass transit and commuter rail feasibility studies required under SEA 105-2007. See Exhibit D. Mr. Piascik stated that the methodology for both studies is based on federal guidelines. Mr. Piascik distributed a glossary of transit technology committee members for reference during his presentation. See Exhibit E.

Commuter Rail Study (See Exhibit F.)

URS and HNTB are conducting a preliminary assessment of the feasibility of commuter rail in central Indiana and will present their final report to the General Assembly by August 30, 2008. See Exhibit D. Commuter rail is a form of mass transit that uses existing infrastructure typically to facilitate longer distance work trips from outlying areas to a central city. See Exhibit E. The study utilized five factors to evaluate the feasibility of commuter rail in central Indiana: (1) ridership; (2) cost; (3) station area rating; (4) population with access; and (5) ease of implementation.

Mr. Piascik described three alternate commuter rail routes from Indianapolis to Muncie and provided a chart that compared the routes with each other and also with bus service. The Indianapolis to Muncie routes range in length from 54 to 58 miles and are comprised of nine to eleven stations. The most feasible of the routes were the N1 and N3 routes, with the N1 route being the most direct route and the N3 route utilizing the existing northeast corridor. Mr. Piascik then presented five alternate routes from Indianapolis to Bloomington, which range in length from 53 to 62 miles. Of the five routes, Mr. Piascik recommended the S4 route because it could be implemented most quickly and has the highest projected ridership.

Mass Transit Study (See Exhibit F.)

SEA 105-2007, SECTION 10 requires URS and HNTB to present a final report on their mass transit study to the General Assembly by January 1, 2009. See Exhibit D. The goals of the study are: (1) understanding the different needs and priorities across Indiana; (2) studying the impact of transit on demographics and vice versa; and (3) identifying appropriate transit funding strategies. URS and HNTB are currently conducting stakeholder interviews and public opinion polls as well as studying mass transit systems in peer cities to complete the study.

Following the presentation of the studies, Senator Wyss asked if the federal government would be increasing the amount of money available to the states for mass transit. Mr. Piascik stated that there would be no increase but that mass transit funding will be eligible for reauthorization next year. Senator Wyss also raised the issue that mass transit can be counterproductive by encouraging flight from urban to suburban areas.

In response to a question from Representative Dembowski, Mr. Piascik told the committee that URS and HNTB have a good working relationship with the Indiana Department of Transportation and that the department is very helpful in providing information to the companies for the studies. Representative Austin encourage Mr. Piascik to continue working with the department to comply with the reporting requirement of SEA 105-2007. Mr. Piascik also discussed at length with Representative Duncan the inclusion of southeastern Indiana in the studies as well as the specific transit problems facing southeastern Indiana.

IV. Other Business and Adjournment

The committee discussed conducting a joint meeting with the Commission on State Tax and Financing Policy on September 23 to discuss funding options for the South Shore Railroad, a topic the committee studied in 2007.

Representative Austin asked the committee members for input to develop the agendas for the remaining two meetings. Representative Blanton mentioned golf cart regulation, and Senator Breaux asked the committee to look at types of mass transit other than commuter rail, such as light rail.

Following committee discussion, Representative Austin scheduled the next meeting for Tuesday, September 16, 2008, at 10:00 a.m. The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.