

Approved: 1/31/96
Date

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Ben Vidricksen at 9:00 a.m. on January 30, 1996 in Room 254-E of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Senator Brady
Senator Harrington - Excused
Senator Rock - Excused

Committee staff present: Hank Avila, Legislative Research Department
Ben Barrett, Legislative Research Department
Bruce Kinzie, Revisor of Statutes
Martha Ozias, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Dean Carlson - Secretary of Transportation

Others attending: See attached list.

SB 491--ABOLISHING THE STATE HIGHWAY ADVISORY COMMISSION

Secretary Carlson spoke in support of this bill explaining that over the years the Department of Transportation's operating practices have become more effective and the selection of practically all projects is now handled by the Department staff. The Highway Advisory Commission's duties are limited and could be easily assumed by the Department and at this point it appears that the amount of staff time devoted to Commission related activities is disproportionate to the value added by those activities. Eliminating the Advisory Commission would result in savings of approximately \$28,000. (Attachment 1)

Senator Lawrence made a motion to recommend this bill as favorable for passage. A second was made by Senator Jones. Motion carried.

Lee Eisenhower requested a bill introduction to replace SB 352 which provides for a fee in lieu of LP gas tax for certain vehicles. The new legislation would change the computation method of tax on LP gas for automobiles.

Senator Jones made a motion to have this legislation introduced. It was seconded by Senator Harris. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Senator Harris to approve the minutes of the January 25th meeting. A seconded was made by Senator Jones. Motion carried.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 9:20 a.m.

The next meeting will be January 31, 1996.



KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

E. Dean Carlson
Secretary of Transportation

*Docking State Office Building
Topeka 66612-1568
(913) 296-3566
TTY (913) 296-3585
FAX (913) 296-1095*

Bill Graves
Governor of Kansas

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES
Regarding S.B. 491
Eliminating the State Highway Advisory Commission**

January 30, 1996

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Kansas Department of Transportation, I am here today to provide testimony in support of S.B. 491. The proposed legislation would repeal K.S.A. 75-5002 and 75-5003, thereby eliminating the State Highway Advisory Commission.

In 1975, the Kansas Legislature established the Kansas Department of Transportation and transferred to it all of the powers, duties, obligations, and functions of the preceding State Highway Commission. The State Highway Advisory Commission was also established at that time. The Commission's twelve members (two from each of KDOT's six geographical districts) are appointed by the Governor.

The Commission is charged with reviewing the status of the highways of the State and proposing and recommending plans for improvement to the Secretary. The Secretary has delegated the responsibility for evaluating and selecting certain projects for two small programs to the Commission. The

Commission's only statutory duty is authority to disapprove the location of a highway or its construction (by a two-thirds vote).

As time has passed, the Department's operating practices have become more objective, and newer, more effective ways have been found to obtain public input. Currently, in practice, the selection of practically all projects is handled by Department staff, operating under priority formulas that take into account various indicators of need. The Commission's duties are limited to responsibilities that could be assumed easily by Department staff, and the amount of staff time devoted to Commission-related activities seems disproportionate to the value added by those activities. In recent months Commission members have expressed concerns about the Commission's role, questioning whether the limited scope of its current responsibilities warrants the expenditure of personal time and staff resources that is required.

Eliminating the Advisory Commission would result in savings of approximately \$28,000 annually in direct expenditures, plus the cost of considerable staff support. Although eliminating the Commission would not result in a large financial savings, it is the type of change that seems to be consistent with the public's desire to shrink government by abolishing programs or activities that can be eliminated without damaging government's effectiveness. Also, where economic development activities are involved, the Secretary would have more flexibility to work with the Secretary of Commerce in supporting or enhancing new capital investments. We respectfully request the Committee's support of S.B.491.