

## HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

March 3, 1977

The Committee on Highways and Transportation was called to order on March 3, 1977, by Chairman Baeth at 10:00 a.m. with all members present.

The following bills were scheduled for hearing today: SB 45, SB 321 and SB 322.

### SENATE BILL 45

Senator Graham, sponsor of this bill, said the reason behind this bill is the present law requires that a school bus driver be examined by "a licensed physician of the State of Montana". This poses a problem for drivers in areas bordering other states. SB 45 would make it read "any physician licensed in the United States or if acceptable to an insurance carrier, any licensed physician". Thus if a driver uses a physician in a neighboring state, the physical would be permitted for a Montana driver.

The wording relating to an insurance carrier is so that if someone bordering Canada wishes to use a Canadian physician for his physical, it would be permitted provided the insurance carrier approves.

Bob Stockton, Public Transportation Reimbursement Supervisor of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, spoke briefly in support of this bill.

There were no opponents. Hearing closed on SB 45.

### SENATE BILL 321

Senator Graham, sponsor of this bill, said this bill changes the age limit for a school bus driver from 21 down to 18 years of age. The new constitution provides that a person becomes of legal age at 18. A driver would have to meet all the requirements of anyone else. It just would allow for the age difference.

On page 1, section 1, subsection 4, there is mentioned again a licensed physician of the state of Montana. It is understood that this would be changed to match SB 45 if SB 45 passes.

Senator Graham feels that lowering the age of school bus drivers will not make any difference in accident rates, and asked Captain Tooley of the Highway Patrol to speak to the committee on this.

Captain Tooley said that the patrol agrees with Senator Graham with regard to accident records regarding buses with younger people. When they are holding down a job and are given the responsibility of driving a large vehicle with passengers, they act responsibly and have quicker reactions than older drivers. These younger people can qualify to drive all commercial vehicles with the only exception being the school bus, as it stands right now.

Bob Stockton, Public Transportation Reimbursement Supervisor of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, said they support this bill. We feel this will provide more flexibility for employment to the school boards of education. They have a present provision that a school bus driver must have a 5-year driving record. If SB 321 were to pass, they would be able to lower that 5-year provision, if they so wish to make more people eligible for employment.

There were no opponents. Hearing closed on SB 321.

#### SENATE BILL 322

Senator Graham, sponsor of this bill, said this is an act to clarify stopping and lighting requirements for school buses.

Captain Tooley of the Highway Patrol said this bill does two things. It deletes the words "carrying any school child" from the railroad crossing requirements. A motorist following a school bus does know if it will stop or not, if a child is not in view. This would require a school bus to stop all the time, even if it has no passengers.

The other change is a correction on the amber lights section. Picking up and dropping off children in the city are always on protected areas, such as turn-offs, etc. The amber lights are for when the bus stops on a highway. This is a warning to motorists that the bus is going to stop. This SB 322 would eliminate the need for amber lights in the cities.

Bob Stockton, Public Transportation Reimbursement Supervisor of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, said they concur with this bill. The change in the railroad crossing requirement would not only help motorists know to

expect a stop every time, but also the drivers themselves will have no question as to when it is necessary.

The amber lights should not be used inside city limits. They are for highway use. The red lights automatically turn on when a bus stops.

There were no opponents. Hearing closed on SB 322.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

SENATE BILL 45

Representative Kropp moved that SB 45 be CONCURRED IN. It was unanimously passed. (Representative Hansen was absent at time of voting.)

Representative Kanduch will carry this bill through the House.

SENATE BILL 321

Representative Kanduch moved that SB 321 be CONCURRED IN. 11 voted yes, with Wood voting no. (Representative Hansen was absent at time of voting.)

Representative Keyser will carry this bill through the House.

SENATE BILL 322

Representative Kanduch moved that SB 322 be CONCURRED IN. It was unanimously passed. (Representative Hansen was absent at time of voting.)

Representative Kanduch will carry this bill through the House.

Executive session ended at 11:00 a.m.

William R. Baeth  
William R. Baeth, Chairman