

## MINUTES

### MONTANA SENATE 52nd LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION

#### COMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORTATION

Call to Order: By SENATOR CECIL WEEDING, Chairman, on April 11, 1991, at 3:00 p.m.

#### ROLL CALL

##### Members Present:

Cecil Weeding, Chairman (D)  
Betty Bruski, Vice Chairman (D)  
Bill Farrell (R)  
Francis Koehnke (D)  
Jerry Noble (R)  
Jack Rea (D)  
Lawrence Stimatz (D)  
Larry Tveit (R)

Members Excused: John Harp (R)

Staff Present: Paul Verdon (Legislative Council).  
Pat Bennett, Secretary

Please Note: These are summary minutes. Testimony and discussion are paraphrased and condensed.

Announcements/Discussion: None.

#### HEARING ON HOUSE BILL 579

##### Presentation and Opening Statement by Sponsor:

REPRESENTATIVE JERRY DRISCOLL, District #92, opened the hearing on HB 579. House Bill 579 was at the request of the County Treasurer's Association to add to the registration periods and puts in a statewide computer system for re-registering a car through the mail.

##### Proponents' Testimony:

CORT HARRINGTON, representing the Montana County Treasurer's Association, testified in favor of HB 579. The Department of Justice requested a similar bill, HB 575, which involved the automation in the state assumption of registration and re-registration of vehicles. The House Highway Subcommittee combined the two into HB 579.

CORT HARRINGTON stated the bill would increase the number of registration periods from 10 to 12, one for each month of the year, and expands the mail re-registration process. The bill requires the Department of Justice to expand their automated computer system for the registration of motor vehicles to include all 56 counties. Currently 13 counties are on line and they do 65% of the re-registration. There is \$1 added to the registration fee to cover this, which will raise approximately \$900,000. This money will be appropriated to the Department of Justice to purchase the equipment to be distributed to the counties.

PETER FUNK, Assistant Attorney General, said the bill is a compromise of the two bills HB 575 and HB 579. The Department of Justice is very satisfied with the compromise that has been worked out and feels that the bill will result in the increase of services to the people of the state.

PATRICIA COOK, Lake County Treasurer, President of the Montana County Treasurer's Association, stated that the bill would provide the collection of taxes on 60 day stickers. It will also provide an affective date of January 1 for vehicle registration.

DEAN ROBERTS, Administrator of the Motor Vehicle Division, stated they support HB 579. The Division for the last 4 years has an automated system which is a jerry-built system which was put together without any money or budget. The total system cost less than \$100,000 over those years and is now serving the functions of law enforcement and vehicle registration in 13 counties. It needs to be updated. It is also important to get these other counties on line for law enforcement purposes. Even the banks have had difficulties with lien filings. This bill will help banks, law enforcement, auto dealers, Department of Justice and other constituents who need this type of information.

STEVE TURKIEWICZ, representing the Montana Auto Dealers Association, stated they have been involved in the process of upgrading the motor vehicle registration system for the state. It is important to implement a comprehensive system for vehicle registration on a statewide basis. The ability for the Department of Justice and the County Treasurers to be able to come up with a workable compromise will be tremendous improvement. He stated that in the past they have opposed any increases in vehicle registration fees, however in this particular case they feel it is reasonable.

CORT HARRINGTON asked that Kevan Bryant who is the Yellowstone County Treasurer requested that he be listed as a proponent.

Opponents' Testimony:

None.

Questions From Committee Members:

SENATOR FARRELL asked why they have amended in another nationally published used-vehicle guide.

DEAN ROBERTS explained that NADA is the guide they presently use. NADA is paid \$35,000 per year for the light cars and truck tape. He stated that they included NADA because they want to do as much mail renewal as possible. NADA does not have a motorcycle tape and it will allow the Department to go out into the market to find someone who is doing a valued motorcycle tape. The Department of Revenue will have to approve anything that is being used. It will give the Department more flexibility to be able to acquire more data tapes to access other kinds of vehicles.

SENATOR STIMATZ asked if they were going through the Department of Administration to get the computer equipment.

DEAN ROBERTS said there is in the bill a computer committee to determine what kind will be purchased. The Department of Administration ISD is on that committee along with two county treasurers, two people from the Department of Justice. Nothing is purchased without the approval of ISD.

SENATOR KOEHNKE asked how long it takes to get titles from on-line counties.

DEAN ROBERTS stated that it takes about 1 week to get a title from an on-line county, it takes 14 days for an off-line county. This will combine all the counties which will make the process run more efficiently.

SENATOR FARRELL asked about the appropriation for \$639,000.

DEAN ROBERTS said he did not think it has been in the Finance and Claims Committee.

MICK ROBINSON stated that the \$1 will raise approximately \$917,000 per year. In FY 92 & 93 there would be an excess above the appropriation to go into the general fund. The equipment will cost approximately \$170,000 of the total appropriations to be purchased over 5 years.

CHAIRMAN WEEDING asked where the additional FTEs would be placed.

MICK ROBINSON stated that out of the 12 FTEs, in the second biennium there would be 3 program analysts to do the programming, 3 computer operators to cover going from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and extending it to 18 hrs per day to handle the volume of activity. The other FTEs are trainers. One of the problems when the 12 counties went on line, they did not have sufficient training for the employees.

Closing by Sponsor:

REPRESENTATIVE DRISCOLL closed the hearing on HB 579.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HOUSE BILL 579

Motion:

SENATOR FARRELL MOVED that HB 579 BE CONCURRED IN.

Discussion:

SENATOR HARP will carry HB 579.

Recommendation and Vote:

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment At: 4:00 p.m.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
SENATOR CECIL WEEDING, Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_  
PAT BENNETT, Secretary

CW/pb

