

Presentation to the Interim Study Committee on  
Feasibility of Long-Range Mass Transit within State and to  
Urban Areas of Neighboring States (S.C.R. 31)  
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee I want to thank you for the opportunity to share some thoughts with you, today. My name is Carl Dahlen. I am the Director of Rural Community and Economic Development for the Nevada Commission on Economic Development. My office is located in Carson City, but my primary focus is on those areas of Nevada outside Reno/Sparks/Carson City and the Las Vegas Valley.

The mission of the Commission is to promote a more diversified and prosperous economy to enrich the quality of life for Nevada citizens. We do this by stimulating business expansion and retention, encouraging entrepreneurial enterprises, attracting businesses, and assisting with community development. For your information, I have attached an organizational chart for the Commission.

The mission of the Rural Community and Economic Development Section of the Commission is *"Building rural Nevada communities where current and future generations can choose to live healthy, productive and prosperous lives by working with local, state, federal, public and private partners."* To accomplish this mission, our primary strategies are:

- Assist local governments in identifying and meeting community development needs.
- Help diversify rural economies across a greater variety of economic sectors.
- Work to strengthen leadership capacity in rural communities.

In regard to the feasibility of long-range mass transit within Nevada, there are five topics I would like to briefly address for the Committee's consideration. The first is the current need for adequate mass transit in rural Nevada. The second will be the future needs of those rural areas near the urban centers. Third is the issue of the movement of goods and materials as well as people. Fourth, I would like to address the use of air travel as a means of mass transit. And finally, I will touch upon the potential for tourism if an efficient system were to be in place.

In rural Nevada, today, there is a need for adequate mass transit services. There are others who can speak with greater knowledge than I can about the problems associated with the current system. However, I am able to verify that the lack of transit services is a critical problem to helping diversify rural economies. Local cities and counties are finding it difficult, if not impossible, to help workers get to jobs in rural areas. An example of this problem occurred this last fall. As the Amazon.com warehouse in Fernley was gearing up for their busiest time of the year, the Lyon County

EXHIBIT B	Mass Transit	Document consists of 4 pages
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Entire document provided.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Due to size limitations, pages _____ through _____ provided.	
A copy of the complete document is available through the Research Library (775-684-6827 or e-mail library@icb.state.nv.us).		Meeting Date 3/2/04

transportation system was forced to discontinue service because of a lack of matching funds for a federal grant that had made the service possible. The impact to Amazon was immediate and caused them to move some of their operations to a second warehouse they have in Reno. It is my understanding that, in the short run, this problem was resolved by Amazon helping arrange transportation for those of their workers who were unable to do so on their own.

However, this specific incident is an example of the larger issue. In addition to Amazon, several other businesses in the Fernley area have expressed concerns about the lack of transit for their workers. The inability for businesses to maintain employees because of a lack of transportation becomes one more reason for those businesses to cross off rural areas of Nevada when they are making location decisions. If businesses feel they can only find a workforce in metropolitan areas, they will leave rural communities and ability to diversify rural economies will be greatly reduced. Rural counties and cities must be able to maintain their economic viability or they will become wards of the state. I would urge this Committee in its deliberations to consider actions that can address the immediate problems of rural mass transit as well as the long-range issues.

In a related topic, future needs for mass transit in the near urban areas of Nevada will continue to increase. As more people locate out of the metropolitan areas, congestion will occur as they try to get to work. In the Las Vegas area, we already are seeing explosive growth in Pahrump and Mesquite. Soon that growth will spread to places like Southern Lincoln County and possibly Searchlight and south. In the Reno and Carson area, the growth has moved into Fernley, Fallon, Minden and Dayton. Soon it may spread as far as Lovelock and Yerington. Mass transit will be needed to move people into and out of the urban areas for jobs, services and amenities that are not available where they live. Since much of the need will cross county lines, it will be important to resolve transit issues on a regional basis. In studying the feasibility of long-range mass transit, one of the early areas of concern will be in the near urban areas.

It is my understanding that the Committee has discussed the possibility of developing a light rail or monorail system that would allow mass transit around the state as well as into and out of the urban centers. At the same time there is a need to move people around Nevada, there is also a need to move goods and materials. Businesses need to be able to obtain the supplies they need to operate their business. They also need to move their products to market. In most rural communities transportation is limited to highways only. While highways are an important component to moving goods and materials, other forms of transportation may improve business opportunities throughout rural Nevada.

For instance in Railroad Valley south of Ely, there is an oil refinery that services the oil field in the valley. For that refinery to remain profitable, it needs additional product to refine. If there was a rail line close to that site, they could bring in crude oil from other areas, refine it and ship out the refined product. Without additional opportunity, the refinery may need to close leading to the loss of several dozen jobs in an area with no other employment opportunities. Currently the refiner is working with

White Pine County officials in the efforts to reactivate the Nevada Northern Rail Road to make their plan work and keep in operation. As the Committee considers the possibility of rail, I would urge you to look to a system that can haul goods and materials as well as people.

The fourth topic I would like to bring to Committee for consideration is the use of air travel as a means for mass transportation between rural communities. Travel by air is much faster than ground transportation. Currently one can fly from Reno to Elko in an hour flight time. By car, that same trip is between four and five hours. Also with air travel, if the flight schedule is not convenient or the destination is not serviced by scheduled flights, a traveler can charter a plane. A single engine Cessna can fly to Ely from Carson City in approximately two hours. That same trip is over five hours by car.

Another advantage to air travel is that much of the infrastructure is already in place. Most Nevada communities have adjacent airports. In many cases these airports may be eligible for funds from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to assist in their upgrading. In Silver Springs, the airport has received millions of dollars in FAA grants to pave the runway, add a taxi way and secure the airport with a fence. These federal dollars have been leveraged with only a few hundred thousands of dollars in local match. With a minimal investment on the part of the state, people and cargo could be moving between rural Nevada communities and from rural areas to urban areas in a very timely manner.

The final topic I would like to bring to the Committee's attention is the tourism potential for any mass transit system. Tourism is one of the most viable economic engines for many rural towns and cities in Nevada. Tourists are drawn to this state not only its natural beauty and mountainous terrain, but also for its history and many local attractions. When this Committee goes to Ely, be sure to arrange a tour of the murals located around the city. Also, ask about the ghost train. Elko has Cowboy Poetry and a Basque Festival in addition to its many outdoor activities. Hawthorne has an annual Fishing Derby and one of only two Armed Forces Day Parades in the nation. Any transit system should be promoted and available to those who want to visit this great state.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to be here today and share my thoughts on mass transit and economic development throughout rural Nevada. The work accomplished by this Committee will provide opportunities to improve the economies of our rural communities. I look forward to seeing your results. At this time, I am available to respond to any questions you may have.

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The Nevada Commission on Economic Development promotes a more diversified and prosperous economy enriching the quality of life for Nevada citizens by stimulating business expansion and retention, encouraging entrepreneurial enterprises, and attracting businesses to create economic growth in Nevada, and assisting with community development.