

1 HOUSE BILL NO. 545

2 INTRODUCED BY A. OLSEN

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4 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMISSION TO STUDY AND MAKE
5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION; ESTABLISHING MEMBERSHIP, DUTIES,
6 AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE
7 DATE AND A TERMINATION DATE."

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9 WHEREAS, passenger rail, air, and bus services provide mobility for senior citizens, persons with
10 disabilities, students, tourists, and business people; and

11 WHEREAS, some communities in Montana are poorly served by public transportation, and options for
12 passenger transportation services in Montana continue to decline; and

13 WHEREAS, if state services are unavailable, many Montanans need local, tribal, or county
14 transportation services for help getting to appointments for medical or other physical needs; and

15 WHEREAS, Amtrak's North Coast Hiawatha ceased operation through southern Montana in 1979, and
16 transportation to and from the major population centers of southern Montana would be greatly enhanced by
17 passenger rail service; and

18 WHEREAS, additional passenger transportation services will increase passenger transportation-related
19 employment because of the need for upgraded infrastructure and operating personnel; and

20 WHEREAS, tourism is Montana's second-largest industry and would be enhanced by improved
21 passenger transportation services; and

22 WHEREAS, the Empire Builder is one of the most popular long-distance passenger trains in the United
23 States, and it is greatly needed for the citizens of Montana's Hi-Line who have limited public transportation
24 options but is challenged by lack of rail capacity causing frequent delays; and

25 WHEREAS, there is currently no board or commission within the state of Montana that is charged with
26 the sole responsibility of overseeing and advocating for passenger transportation services, including passenger
27 rail, passenger air, and passenger bus services.

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1 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

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3 NEW SECTION. Section 1. Passenger transportation study commission. (1) There is a
4 passenger transportation study commission composed of eight members. The commission is allocated to the
5 legislative services division for staffing services and administrative purposes only.

6 (2) (a) The commission consists of the following members:

7 (i) two members of the house of representatives appointed by the speaker with the concurrence of the
8 minority leader, one from the majority party and one from the minority party;

9 (ii) two senators appointed by the president with the concurrence of the minority leader, one from the
10 majority party and one from the minority party; and

11 (iii) four regional representatives, subject to subsection (2)(b), selected by the director of the
12 department of transportation who represent different areas of the state and represent the interests of expanded
13 passenger transportation services in the state.

14 (b) Selections made in accordance with subsection (2)(a)(iii) must include a representative of a
15 passenger rail commission and a representative of the bus transportation sector.

16 (3) The commission shall:

17 (a) examine opportunities for expanding and improving passenger transportation service in the state;

18 (b) provide specific recommendations on how to improve passenger transportation services in the
19 state, including but not limited to the establishment of a permanent passenger transportation commission;

20 (c) outline financial opportunities, including cooperative interstate agreements, grant and loan
21 programs, and other resources that the state may utilize to grow passenger transportation services; and

22 (d) assess any other areas of passenger transportation that the commission considers necessary to
23 expand and improve passenger transportation services in the state.

24 (4) The commission shall complete its work and issue a written report of its findings and
25 recommendations by September 1, 2022, to the 68th legislature in accordance with 5-11-210.

26 (5) Members of the commission must be compensated as provided in 2-15-124 and must be
27 reimbursed for travel expenses as provided in 2-18-501 through 2-18-503. Members of the commission who are
28 full-time salaried officers or employees of the state or of any political subdivision of the state are entitled to their

1 regular compensation. Legislator members must be compensated as provided in 5-2-302.

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3 NEW SECTION. Section 2. Appropriation. There is appropriated \$30,000 from the general fund to
4 the legislative services division for the biennium beginning July 1, 2021, for the purposes of funding the
5 commission and the study as provided in [section 1].

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7 NEW SECTION. Section 3. Effective date. [This act] is effective July 1, 2021.

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9 NEW SECTION. Section 4. Termination. [This act] terminates June 30, 2023.

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