

SJR 26: TRANSPORTING OVERSIZE LOADS Proposed Study Plan

Prepared for the Revenue and Transportation Interim Committee
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Introduction and Background

Senate Joint Resolution No. 26 (SJR 26) requests an interim study of transporting oversize loads through Montana. Legislators ranked the study 13th out of the 17 study resolutions in the postsession poll of interim studies. In May 2013, the Legislative Council assigned the study to the Revenue and Transportation Interim Committee.

SJR 26 directs the interim committee to identify any impediments in Montana law that preclude or discourage transporting oversize loads through the state and options for removing or mitigating the impediments to efficiently and cost-effectively transporting oversize and other loads through Montana.

Transportation of Oversize Loads

The movement of oversize loads through Montana in 2011 and 2012 focused attention on issues related to the transportation of oversize loads through the state. SJR 26 requests that an interim committee explore how to establish a predictable, timely, and cost-effective process to allow movement of oversize loads through Montana.

Stakeholders testifying at the hearings on SJR26 suggested some areas on which the committee might focus:

- financing options for necessary improvements such as relocating power lines and traffic signals or constructing pullouts;
- the permitting process;
- the environmental review process; and
- the role of local government planning.

As stated in a "Whereas" clause, a goal of the study is to find ways to reduce project costs and expedite the movement of people and goods by eliminating delays, reducing regulatory burdens, improving agencies' work practices, lowering costs, and accelerating completion of transportation projects. The resolution also suggests that the Committee consider how the movement of oversize loads interacts with Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act, Public Law 112-141, commonly referred to as MAP-21.

Study Tasks

For a study of transporting oversize loads through Montana, the study resolution suggests that the Committee identify:

1. any impediments in Montana law that preclude or discourage transporting oversize loads through the state; and

2. options to remove or mitigate the impediments to efficiently and in a cost-effective manner transport oversized and other loads through Montana.

The resolution also requests that the Committee look to other states or Canadian provinces for legislative methods or means enacted to foster the transport of oversized loads through various public jurisdictions, including by establishing or authorizing the establishment of commerce corridors.

Study Resources

The study resolution language requests assistance from the following stakeholders: the Montana Department of Transportation, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, local governments, highway user groups, and the U.S. Department of Transportation.

In addition, the Legislative Fiscal Division can model revenue impacts from any change in oversized vehicle fees or other fiscal policies considered by the Committee.

Outline of Study Activities

1. Compile background information: September 2013 - February 2013. This stage includes several steps designed to provide the Committee with information about transporting oversized loads, including:
 - a. an overview of state laws governing the movement of oversized vehicles;
 - b. logistical, safety, and environmental considerations when moving oversized loads;
 - c. overview of policies of other states or Canadian provinces that address movement of oversized vehicles, including establishment of commerce corridors; and
 - d. overview of MAP-21 relevance to transporting oversized loads.
2. Identify issues: February 2014 - May 2014. Study activities during this period will focus on identifying the issues of greatest importance to address through further analysis or legislation. Some topics raised during the hearings on SJR 26 include sources for financing, environmental considerations, and permitting.
3. Review and decide legislative options: July 2014 - September 2014. After compiling background information, identifying issues, and researching options, the Committee will decide whether to develop findings and recommendations and/or request legislation.

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Summary of Senate Joint Resolution 26 Study Plan

Study Activity	Source	Activity	Meeting Date	Committee Time
1. Overview of state laws governing movement of oversized vehicles	Staff research, MDT	Staff materials, public comment	September 2013	1 hour
2. Logistical, safety, and environmental considerations for moving oversized vehicles	MDT, DEQ, highway user groups	Agency and stakeholder presentations, public comment	September 2013	1.5 hours
3. Overview of other state/province policies, including commerce corridors	Staff research, MDT, highway user groups	Staff materials, agency presentations, public comment	December 2013	1 hour
4. Overview of MAP-21 relevance for transporting oversized loads	Staff research, MDT, US DOT	Staff materials, agency presentations, public comment	February 2014	1 hour
5. Identify issues. Topics may include financing, environmental considerations, and permitting	Stakeholder input	Panel discussions, public comment	February and May 2014	3 hours
6. Develop findings and recommendations for final report and, if desired, request bill drafts for 2013 session	Committee members	Committee work session, stakeholder input, public comment	July 2014	2 hours
7. Review any requested legislation and draft final report	Staff, committee members	Committee work session, stakeholder input, public comment	September 2014	1.5 hours
Total				11 hours