

SPEED LIMITS, PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE AND DEREGULATION LEGISLATION RECEIVE APPROVAL

By Marta McCloskey
Staff Writer

**SB 685 (CS) Do Pass,
Amended**
SB 693 Do Pass
**SB 988 Do Pass,
Amended**
**SB 989 Do Pass,
Amended**
SB 1059 Do Pass
**SB 1192 Do Pass,
Amended**
SJR 35 Do Pass

■(GIT) Thursday, members of the House Transportation Committee approved seven measures involving issues relating to speed limits, passenger rail service and the abolishment of the Transportation division of the Corporation Commission, as well as the Motor Vehicle Enforcement Division of the Oklahoma Tax Commission.

The committee substitute for **SB685**, authored by Chairman of the Committee, Larry Adair, D-Stilwell, sets maximum speed and minimum speed limits for interstate and four-lane divided highways. Adair offered an amendment to delete turnpikes out of a section of the bill. "There is a conflict, because the Turnpike Authority sets their own speed limits." He added, "This can be worked out later in conference committee. The amendment was adopted.

Adair offered a second amendment. "Rep. Dusty Rhodes, D-Checotah, told me that in some parts of the state the highway system routes through state parks, and my amendment would lower the speed limit of those sections of road to 45 m.p.h." The amendment was adopted.

Rep. Dale Wells, D-Cushing, offered an amendment to raise the speed limits of 2-lane roads from 60 to 65 m.p.h. The amendment was adopted. Members voted 23 to 1 to do pass to the measure out of committee.

Two measures were approved pertaining to passenger rail service. **SB693**, authored by Rep. Randall Erwin, D-Nashoba, adds passenger rail service within the state to allowable deposits of revenue generated from motor fuels excise tax. Members voted 24 to 0 to do pass the bill out of committee.

SB1192, also by Adair, creates the Oklahoma Tourism and Passenger Rail Act. The bill received two amendments. Adair offered an amendment to include Tulsa and Oklahoma City for rail passenger service. The amendment was adopted. The second amendment by Rep. James Dunlap, R-Bartlesville, offered to limit the number of projects. The amendment was adopted. The bill received a do pass vote of 21 to 2.

SB1059 received considerable debate. The measure, by Adair, abolishes the Transportation Division of the Corporation Commission and the Motor Vehicle Enforcement Division of the Oklahoma Tax Commission. Adair explained that the consolidation of these divisions would create a one-stop shop process for truckers and others. Adair offered an amendment to the bill that clarified language relating to the transfer of employees. "With this amendment, there will be no mandatory transfers," he said. Rep. Fred Perry, R-Tulsa, said he was not insensitive about the employees, but if the department has extra employees as a result of the transfer, he would like to see the appropriate "corporate actions" taken.

Rep. Danny Hilliard, D-Sulphur, was in opposition of the bill. "As Subcommittee Transportation Chair, I do not want to see us start creating another agency. I question the fiscal impact of this...look at the Department of Environmental Quality, we have tried one-stop shopping." He added, "Many truckers do not even know about this legislation."

Rep. Leonard Sullivan, R-Oklahoma City, was in favor of the bill. "This bill will streamline and modernize the system." Adair agreed. "Other states are doing this to eliminate bureaucracy," he said. "I plan to strike the title and enacting clause on the floor." The bill received a do pass vote of 21 to 3.

Other measures approved by members included:

SB989, authored by Rep. Ray Vaughn, R-Edmond, authorizes the Transportation Commission to create a State Infrastructure Bank for the purpose of pooling available federal, state and private funds to be dedicated for transportation projects. The bill was amended three times by members. The first amendment by Rep. Don Weese, R-Broken Arrow, ensured that there was no possibility the Turnpike Authority could build free roads in larger metropolitan communities, in an effort to prevent the Department of Transportation and the Turnpike Authority from contract-

(Continued)