

Bill: SB 197 – Transportation Funding and Governance Amendments

Sponsor: Senator Harper

Floor Sponsor:

UASD Position: Track

This Bill amends provisions related to the governance of a large public transit district and financial reporting of public transit districts.

Discussion: Senator Harper explained that he and Representative Christofferson reviewed the current leadership structure of the Utah Transit Authority (“UTA”) and compared it with neighboring large transportation districts. He stated that the Bill would repeal UTA’s existing governance structure and establish a new organization led by an Executive Director appointed by the Governor, along with a seven-member transit commission modeled after the governance structure of the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”). The Bill would also repeal the local advisory council and is intended to position UTA to better respond to the transportation needs of the Wasatch Front.

Senator Kwan questioned the absence of elected officials on the proposed transit commission. Senator Harper responded that, while elected officials are accountable to constituents, a commission-based model would provide greater efficiency and operational flexibility. Senator Riebe raised concerns about potential loss of representation on boards and commissions, particularly for Salt Lake County. The sponsor explained that Davis, Weber, Box Elder, Utah, and Salt Lake Counties would each be able to nominate commission members. Senator Ipson spoke in support of the Bill, citing the effectiveness of the UDOT governance model.

Kate Bradshaw, Mayor of Bountiful and President of the Utah League of Cities and Towns (“League”), testified that the League had not taken a formal position on the Bill but appreciates the sponsor’s collaboration. She expressed concern that the Bill would shift additional authority to the state rather than local governments. A former League president testified in support, favoring increased state involvement, and a member of the public also spoke in support. Representatives from UDOT and the Wasatch Front Regional Council testified in support, emphasizing the need for a coordinated, world-class transit system.

Senator Kwan expressed appreciation for the sponsor’s work and willingness to continue refining the Bill. Senator Riebe thanked the current UTA Trustees for their service and noted some hesitation about the increase in board size, adding that she looks forward to hearing further input from the League.

Yeas: 5

Nays: 0

N/V: 3

Outcome: SB 197 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: HB 17 – Public Infrastructure District Meetings Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Welton

Floor Sponsor: Senator Brammer

UASD Position: Track

This Bill requires public infrastructure district meetings be held at a location in the boundaries of the public infrastructure district subject to certain exceptions.

Discussion: Representative Welton explained that the Bill would require Public Infrastructure District (“PID”) board meetings to be held in locations accessible to the ratepayers they serve. While the Bill allows for online participation, it would require an anchor physical location within the PID’s service area. The sponsor cited an example of a Utah County PID holding board meetings in St. George as evidence of the need for clearer meeting location requirements.

Senator Winterton spoke in support of the Bill, stating that it is unreasonable for citizens to travel long distances to participate in meetings and express their views. Senator Harper asked whether the Bill would apply to existing PIDs, and the sponsor clarified that the provisions would apply to every PID. Senator Harper also asked whether the sponsor would be open to amendments as the Bill moves through the legislative process. Representative Welton responded that, while there is public interest in dissolving PIDs, the Bill is limited in scope and does not address dissolution.

Yeas: 5

Nays: 0

N/V: 3

Outcome: HB 17 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.