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ROLL NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

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Lu Costa Rickford
Operator's Signature

10/3/03
Date

2003 HOUSE TRANSPORTATION

HB 1292

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2003 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

BILL/RESOLUTION NO. HB 1292

House Transportation Committee

Conference Committee

Hearing Date January 31, 2003

Tape Number	Side A	Side B	Meter #
1	x		0.4 to 40.9

Committee Clerk Signature *Laurie Fick*

Minutes:

Rep. Weisz, Chairman opened the hearing on HB 1292, a bill for an Act to amend and reenact section 39-24-4 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to a snowmobile access fee.

Rep. Nelson: Representing District 7 introduced this bill on behalf of some individual snowmobilers. There is a bill in this legislature to raise the snowmobile license fees from \$20 to \$40. The concerns raised was that there is a trail fee in all the neighboring states and provinces -- the thought is that the license increase is an attempt to get trail fees on the backs of the snowmobile owners and not all the users who come here use our trails. This just an attempt to share these cost with those who come into the state.

Rep. Hawken: How would we do this -- is it easy to do?

Rep. Nelson: In other states there is a sticker you get when you buy your trail permit of pay your trail fee. In this state enforcement may be a problem but it probably be self policing.

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Bill/Resolution Number HB 1292
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Rep. Hawken: How would they know where to buy the trail fee if there isn't someone out there at the trail?

Rep. Nelson: They would go through the vendors and dealers.

Rep. Severson: Representing District 23 stood to support the bill. He felt this was a safety issue because if you don't have good groomed and marked trails people just hear out across country. There are fences and obstacles. With more groomed trails there wouldn't be a need for facing these hazards.

Rep. Thorpe: (6.6) In my experience is that if this was properly set up there would be a lot of support for this and greater use of the trails.

Rep. Weisz: Rep. Severson - do you see the possibility of fewer people coming into the state because of this?

Rep. Severson: No I don't -- we go to Minnesota and they have a fee and I have never seen anybody object to paying the fee. I think they are used to it -- expect it -- if you have good trails well marked and groomed it may draw more.

Rep. Zaiser: What are the fees in other states like Minnesota and Colorado in the mountains?

Rep. Severson: I don't remember -- its been a couple of years and we paid in lump sum for several sleds.

Rep. Nelson: I understand that Minnesota is \$15. Manitoba is \$30 Canadian.

Opposition:

Gary Markwart: Board member of the Board of Directors for Snowmobile North Dakota. A copy of written testimony is attached.

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Bill/Resolution Number HB 1292
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Carrie Bahmer Executive secretary for Snowmobile North Dakota was present to answer questions.

Rep. Weisz: Do you have any idea of how many out of state snowmobilers come to North Dakota.

Carrie Bahmer: We believe about 100 to 200. It depends on the snow year.

Rep. Delmore: Isn't this an equity issue -- wouldn't it be a way to track how many come into the state.

Carrie Bahmer: It may be but the other side of the issue is that right now it going to cost more to set up than we will get in to administer the fee. We need to print enough stickers to have a supply on hand for all the dealers, vender, recreation site, etc. That is to print many more than we need. We need to distribute the stickers -- then we need to equitably distribute the receipts, monitor the improvements, do the marking and signing. We see more problems than it is worth. That is not considering the enforcement side of it and we are not set up to do that -- collect the fines and penalties.

Gary Markwart: I travel around quite a bit to Montana, Wyoming, Colorado --- Their fines are \$20 to \$50 and they do have people riding the trails all the time for enforcement.

Rep. Delmore: Couldn't this be the start of something -- it wouldn't be much of problem to bump the fines up. Why not have what Minnesota has?

Gary Markwart: Minnesota has a combination of family activities associated with snowmobiling and it would have to be promoted that way. We don't have that is this state -- out of stater will go to where the snow is -- to Bismarck if the snow is there or to the Turtle Mountains is that is where the snow is.

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Carrie Bahmer: When you go to Minnesota they have 300 miles of trails from a family center and you can go in any direction. Here in North Dakota we have 3000 miles of groomed trails and 800 miles of ungroomed trails throughout the state. However, they are not strategically located around site with enough options at one site.

Rep. Thorpe: Have you folks discussed Rep. Severson's idea of acquiring the abandoned railroad ?

Carrie Bahmer: Yes we have looked into that and the cost is prohibitive -- for example the line from Marion to Luca if about \$350,000.

Tom Balzer: With the North Dakota Parks and Recreation. That is \$350,000 and then you have to pull the ties, relay the gravel, and set down the signs, etc.

Unidentified voice: We had other problems on that stretch of railroad bed south of Mandan -- if you have notice -- railroads build their line above surrounding land and the wind sweeps the snow off. It seldom had good snow on it.

Rep. Headland: Is snowmobiling in North Dakota adequately funded now? There is a movement to double the license for residents.

Gary Markwart: Important thing is that we would be for anything that made us money -- but we would want to study this to make sure that we wouldn't loose money -- cost more to set up than we make.

Rep. Headland: You already have sticker for residents -- why couldn't the same type of sticker be used?

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Carrie Bahmer: The stickers that we get don't cost that much and we can order different colors for different years to buy in volume -- but the problem is to set up the distribution, sales and collections and enforcement.

Rep. Weiler: Do you have any numbers on the costs per mile of these trails?

Carrie Bahmer: The costs of grooming is about \$5 per mile per grooming and 6 -9 groomings per year. There are other maintenance costs also and that depends upon the trail conditions.

Rep. Weiler: Doing some quick fuzzy math -- that over a hundred thousand dollars per year -- the instate snowmobilers are paying for all that every year -- through this fund -- correct?

Carrie Bahmer: Some of it is -- and other parts of it come from and through local snowmobile clubs, business donations -- right now we work on a \$600,000 a year budget.

Re. Weiler: So the out of state snowmobilers are coming and using these trails for free?

Gary Markwart: When you went to other states you paid for motel, paid green fees, etc. we look at this in way that it increases tourism. Bottineau is the only area we can call our tourism area.

Rep. Ruby: You want us to understand you prefer that between the fee you pay and your organization and business organization willing to pay -- you think that is where you want it left?

Gary Markwart: If we could see a real plan put together that would bring in real funds -- that is where we would want to be.

Rep. Thorpe: (20.8) Just reading through this one page bill I fail to see where you feel threatened with enforcement. If this bill were to pass I would think you would use the additional fees as you do now.

Tom Balzer: ND Parks and Recreation -- his testimony is **Neutral** and his comments in written form are attached.

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Rep. Delmore: The start up fee for printing and the like would be a one time cost?

Tom Balzer: Correct.

Rep. Headland: (38.1) Do you have any idea how many residents are non-registered snowmobilers?

Tom Balzer: I wish I new -- their names, addresses -- no we don't know and there are some register in Minnesota and its cheaper -- but most those who do is because of the excise tax.

Rep. Weisz: The legislation is yearly fee.

There being no other persons wishing to testify for or against HB 1292, Chairman Weisz closed the hearing.

End of record (40.9)

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2003 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

BILL/RESOLUTION NO. HB 1292b

House Transportation Committee

Conference Committee

Hearing Date 2-7-03

Tape Number	Side A	Side B	Meter #
2	xx		9.7-18.9
Committee Clerk Signature <i>Louise Zide</i>			

Minutes:

Chairman Welsz: What are the committee's wishes in regard to HB 1292. The amendments aren't here to try and fix this bill.

Rep. Headland: I realize that I am on the bill, I decided basically not to bring forth any amendments and the Snowmobiling Association testified against it, I will move a Do Not Pass on HB 1292.

Rep. Ruby: Seconded.

Rep. Delmore: I, too, am on this bill. There were also some games being played by the Snowmobile Association. It was amenable to amendments that they were to bring forward and so on. They didn't. I think some of the information they gave us, was erroneous. Also, the Parks and Recreation people said they could live with this. I resist a Do Not Pass because I think there is merit in this, there is a bill in to raise state fees on resident snowmobiling.

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