

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee March 29, 2022

**FRIESEN:** OK. Welcome, everyone, to this afternoon's meeting of the-- or hearing of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee. We are going to have a few procedural items. I'm going to ask you to silence all your cell phones. Those wishing to testify ever should fill out a green sheet. So that you can fill it out and you will be able to testify. Handouts are not required. Obviously, we're not going to deal with that. Make sure you clearly state and spell your first and last names for the record. Acoustics in this room are challenging, so everybody speak directly into the mike and talk as loud as you can. We will use the light system, but it won't be necessary, I don't think, today. And with that, my committee counsel to my right is Mike Hybl. The clerk, committee clerk is Sally Schultz and we have no pages today. So if you need something, you have to get it yourself. And today we are going to do some gubernatorial appointments and we are going to start with Chad Tessman. And if you want to come forward and spell your name and then you can talk for a few minutes about yourself and--

**CHAD TESSMAN:** Sure.

**FRIESEN:** --see if anybody has any questions.

**CHAD TESSMAN:** My name is Chad Tessman, C-h-a-d T-e-s-s-m-a-n. I'm a-- reside in Henderson, Nebraska. I am a car dealer in York, a used car dealer. We've been open for 11, 11 years or we're on our 11th year. I've got experience in a new car business here in town for I think it was 12 years prior to that so I've been a little over 20 years in the car business. I'm also the president of the Independent Auto Dealers Association and yeah, just excited to get involved, so.

**FRIESEN:** Thank you. Any questions from the committee? I see that you have as a reference a politician. Is that a strike against you?

**CHAD TESSMAN:** Yeah.

**FRIESEN:** How long have you been selling cars?

**CHAD TESSMAN:** I've been selling in York for-- I'm on my 11th year.

**FRIESEN:** Eleventh year?

**CHAD TESSMAN:** And I've been in the retail part of the business at-- in the new car store for two years and then the wholesale part of the business for, let's see, it had been probably five years before that.

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**FRIESEN:** Are you familiar at all with what this board does?

**CHAD TESSMAN:** Yeah, I have, I have a good understanding of what, what it does and what, what they're involved with. I have a colleague that is on the, on the board also.

**FRIESEN:** OK. Any other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you.

**CHAD TESSMAN:** All right, thank you.

**FRIESEN:** Do we have anyone who wish to testify in favor of the confirmation of Chad Tessman? Seeing none, anyone wish to testify in opposition? Seeing none, anyone wish to testify in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, we'll close the hearing on Chad Tessman. Next is Thomas R. McCaslin. He's from Broken Bow. Hello. Mr. McCaslin?

**THOMAS McCASLIN:** Yes.

**FRIESEN:** Yes, welcome to the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee. I will give you an opportunity for a couple of minutes to tell us about yourself and what you-- what your vision is for the board and anything else you want to tell us. Make sure you spell your name.

**THOMAS McCASLIN:** Thomas McCaslin, T-h-o-m-a-s M-c-C-a-s-l-i-n. I am a dealer principal at Gateway Motors Chevrolet in Broken Bow and Sandhills Motors Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, Ram. I've been the dealer principal for going on 17 years with the Chevrolet store and this is going to be my second term on the Motor Vehicle Industry Licensing Board and I look forward to serving another term and networking with our other members of the board.

**FRIESEN:** OK. Is there any questions from the committee? Senator Albrecht.

**ALBRECHT:** I hope you can hear me. This is Senator Joni Albrecht and I was just wondering, can you give me two or three things that have been happening on that board that are of concern to you or that you're looking forward to seeing through to the end of a good result?

**THOMAS McCASLIN:** You know, we really haven't had a lot of activity on the board, which is a good thing because that means that the, the dealers in the state of Nebraska are doing the right thing. So we just hope that we keep moving forward that way and not have any big problems with the manufacturers, franchises, and such.

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**ALBRECHT:** And do you see any, any particular bills that you would want looked at, introduced, or changed in the future?

**THOMAS McCASLIN:** Not at this time, I do not.

**ALBRECHT:** Great, thank you.

**FRIESEN:** Thank you, Senator Albrecht. Any other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you. We will see if there's any other testimony as far as your appointment, but thank you for taking the time to talk to us today.

**THOMAS McCASLIN:** You're welcome. Thank you.

**FRIESEN:** Does anyone wish to testify in favor of Mr. McCaslin? Seeing none, anyone wish to testify in opposition? Seeing none, anyone wish to testify in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, thank you, Mr. McCaslin. With that, we'll close the hearing on Thomas R. McCaslin. The next, next one will be Barbara Keegan. Welcome, Ms. Keegan, to the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee.

**BARBARA KEEGAN:** Hello. Thank you for taking me, Senator Friesen-- allowing me to do this via the phone. I am Barbara Keegan, common spelling, B-a-r-b-a-r-a, last name, Keegan, K-e-e-g-a-n.

**FRIESEN:** So this is a reappointment so if you want to say a few words, you can take a couple of minutes and tell us about yourself and what you think of the position you currently have.

**BARBARA KEEGAN:** OK. I am a licensed highway superintendent. I have done that since 1991. I am currently the county highway superintendent from Box Butte County. I've been that-- in that position since 1994. I was appointed to the Board of Public Road Classifications and Standards in November of 2005 to replace Alan Doll. I do represent the Class III or IV counties, the populations of the 9,000 to 19,999. The board has been a very educational experience for me, going back to, you know, 2014 when we-- the remote residential was a classification that was added. In 2018, we updated the form, the, the 3R, and now we are moving towards the practical design. So I am excited to, to hopefully continue on and have that come into play.

**FRIESEN:** OK, thank you, Ms. Keegan. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, I thank you for taking time to visit with us this morning. We'll see if anyone wishes to testify. Anyone wish to testify in favor of the appointment of Ms. Keegan to the classifications-- Board of Public Roads Classifications? Seeing none, anyone wish

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testify in opposition? Seeing none, anyone wish testify in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, we'll close the hearing on Barbara Keegan. Next we will open the hearing on James Litchfield. Welcome, Mr. Litchfield, to the Tele-- Transportation and Telecommunications Committee.

**JAMES LITCHFIELD:** Yes, sir.

**FRIESEN:** So I will give you a few minutes if you want to talk about your, your reappointment and your position on the board and how-- anything else you want to talk about for a couple of minutes.

**JAMES LITCHFIELD:** All right. The paragraph says I was supposed to clearly state my name, James A. Litchfield, and then spell it. It's J-a-m-e-s L-i-t-c-h-f-i-e-l-d.

**FRIESEN:** Very good.

**JAMES LITCHFIELD:** All right. Well, I appreciate the opportunity to-- and privilege, it really is a privilege to serve on this board. We've got a good group of qualified, dedicated individuals that work diligently to meet the needs of the cities and counties across the state. I think a couple of things that we've accomplished has been to improve the quality of the work coming in and out and the efficiency of communities' ability to reduce the amount of paperwork and reports that has to go in is, I think, a big plus for what we've done. It's definitely shown in the fact that over this last year, of course, we've had COVID issues, but the amount of times that the board has met tells me that a lot of these projects are being reviewed and made available to work in different manners and fashion. And again, we tried to reduce the amount of paperwork and requirements from these entities and I think that has to be a big plus as well.

**FRIESEN:** OK, thank you, Mr. Litchfield. Any questions from the committee? I see that you are-- are you the city administrator of Wakefield?

**MOSER:** He signed off, I think.

**SALLY SCHULTZ:** I'm sorry.

**FRIESEN:** OK. Anyone wish to testify in favor of Mr. Litchfield? Anyone wish to testify in opposition? Seeing none, anyone wish to testify in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, we'll close the hearing on James Litchfield. Next, we'll open the hearing on Edward R. Wootton, Sr.

**EDWARD R. WOOTTON, SR.:** Hello.

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**FRIESEN:** Mr. Wootton, can you hear us?

**EDWARD R. WOOTTON, SR.:** Yeah, I can barely hear you.

**FRIESEN:** OK, I'm going to try and talk loud.

**EDWARD R. WOOTTON, SR.:** Oh.

**FRIESEN:** I'd ask that you state and spell your name and then spend a few minutes telling us about yourself.

**EDWARD R. WOOTTON, SR.:** OK, I'll, I'll do that. My name is Edward. That's E-d-w-a-r-d. My middle initial is R and my last name is Wootton, W-o-o-t-t-o-n, and I'm a senior, S-r. And I've been on the Board of Public Roads presently about 20 years and I was first appointed by Governor Mike Johanns on October 31, 2002, and I've been continuously on the board ever since. And my-- some of my work record is when I first got out of high school in 1948, I was appointed city street superintendent here in Bellevue, Nebraska, where I've resided for the last-- since I was born. And I, I also was there at the city for 15 years as their street superintendent and ultimately, I was in charge of everything at the city of Bellevue. Then I left there and was construction the rest of my life until I started for Sarpy County as their highway superintendent and I'd done that for 15 years and then I was a fleet administrator for ten years. But my occupation, along with being these other things, was a-- I've been a dirt mover all my life, a heavy equipment operator and a superintendent on a dirt-moving crew for many years. And along with the-- all that stuff, I was also a volunteer fireman here in Bellevue for 60 years. I had the record and of course, they went to paid fire department in 2008 and so I haven't been a member since then. I'm just still on the Volunteer Fire Department Incorporated here in Bellevue. I'm on their board yet, so-- but that's kind of what I've, I've done all my life. I've been around highway systems and pretty well associated with the people in the Department of Transportation and so I don't know what else I can tell you that-- just been-- I love being on the board. It's, it's the best board I've ever been on. It's, it's not a rubber-stamp board. They stick strictly to the, to the law and they're very-- they're a wonderful board and that's-- I feel that we all are pretty well knowledgeable about what we're doing and I really like that. And so I've had a wonderful experience being on the board. LeMoyné Schulz is a wonderful person and he's got a wonderful staff and all of the folks that I deal with down there at the-- at Lincoln is wonderful and I've been-- you know, I've put on motor grader

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courses all over the state. So that's about it for me and if you have any questions, I'd be more than happy to answer them.

**FRIESEN:** OK, thank you, Mr. Wootton. Yeah, I do have a few road graders that could use some instruction out my way, but we won't go there. It sounds like you've got quite the experience, so anybody on the committee have any questions for Mr. Wootton?

**EDWARD R. WOOTTON, SR.:** No.

**FRIESEN:** Seeing none, I do thank you for everything you've done. It sounds like you've had a busy time and I do appreciate you being a volunteer firefighter. So with that--

**EDWARD R. WOOTTON, SR.:** Well, I'm also a veteran. You know, I've been a veteran of the Korean War and so I-- that also. Thank you so much for your kindness and, and the opportunity to be a member of the board.

**FRIESEN:** OK and we appreciate your service.

**EDWARD R. WOOTTON, SR.:** Thank you.

**FRIESEN:** With that, we will ask if there's anyone wishing to testify in favor of Mr. Wootton? Seeing none--

**EDWARD R. WOOTTON, SR.:** Well--

**FRIESEN:** --anyone wish to testify in opposition? Seeing--

**EDWARD R. WOOTTON, SR.:** Thank, thank you so much for the opportunity to be on this board and I appreciate being a member.

**FRIESEN:** You're welcome and thank you for taking time to visit with us today.

**EDWARD R. WOOTTON, SR.:** Yes and thank you and you have-- all you folks have a nice day and a safe trip home.

**FRIESEN:** Thank you.

**EDWARD R. WOOTTON, SR.:** God bless you. Bye-bye.

**FRIESEN:** Anyone wish to testify in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, that will close the hearing on Edward R. Wootton. Next: Brandie S. Neemann. Welcome. We get really hard on those that show up in person.

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**BRANDIE NEEMANN:** Oh boy. Maybe I should have dialed in.

**FRIESEN:** Go ahead and state your name and spell it.

**BRANDIE NEEMANN:** OK. My name is Brandie Neemann, B-r-a-n-d-i-e, last name is N-e-e-m-a-n-n.

**FRIESEN:** Go ahead and tell us a little bit about yourself and, and what you see as your position-- how you look at the board and--

**BRANDIE NEEMANN:** OK, perfect. I've been at the Department of Transportation for-- math on the fly-- 24 years. My entire professional career has been at the Department of Transportation. I did start as a student, so admittedly not all of those 24 years were post-graduation. I did spend some time in rotation at the department as a student learning about our project development, roadway design, and bridge divisions trying to figure out where my niche was and where I preferred to be. In 2001, I graduated and found my home in the roadway design division. And so while I was there for seven or eight years-- can't do the math in my head that fast-- I spent most of my time either managing our consultant deliver projects or designing some rural highway projects, mostly in central and towards western Nebraska. I did have the opportunity to work on the interstate design west of Lincoln, I guess it would be, before I actually returned to the project development division, did that in 2008. So when I went to the project development division, my role was to lead our project scoping group. So this was a group that was newly formed or maybe reimaged, I guess, at that point. And we took time to assess the highway projects that were programmed. We will look for where there might be geometric deficiencies, where there might be issues where we don't meet standards, looking for ways that we can meet those standards, correct the deficiencies, address safety concerns, maintenance concerns, and we would put that together, document those needs, develop a cost, and send the project on its way. Eventually, I took on utility coordination in that role as well. And then in 2016, I became the division head for the project development division. And so as my role has expanded, I still have that project scoping group. I also have our group that develops studies for major transportation improvements like the expressway projects or grade separations. I have a group that does survey, a group that does professional services procurement, and then my largest group is our environmental section. So we do all of our environmental reviews and documentation to meet our federal and state requirements for the transportation projects we deliver. So I think that that role, especially since we're a CE assignment state, has really benefited in doing some additional risk

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analysis, really thinking about procedures, applying the context of the laws that we're supposed to, to fulfill and making sure that all of our decisions are adequately documented. I think that that's something that's important to think about as you move into the more-- as we're considering our standards and when and how we consider their applications throughout the state. I guess you wanted to know about what my-- I think my role would be. I think in its simplest terms, it's really to serve the users of the transportation system in the state of Nebraska. I might be a representative of the Department of Transportation, but I think that the strongest tie there is using the experiences that I've had at the Department of Transportation to apply that to the board, to the standards, to providing thoughtful consideration, to providing consistency in application of standards, providing a thoughtful approach to practicality, to risks, to how safety might be affected by the decisions that are made, particularly if a deviation from the standards needs to occur. So I think that's one of the, the most rewarding parts of that-- of the, the role on the board is to be able to be that body that assists making those really thoughtful decisions that are, that are impactful to the users. I think with all of the miles of highway, in addition to 93 counties and over 500 municipalities, it's really important that we provide a consistent approach to that, so.

**FRIESEN:** Thank you, Ms. Neemann. Senator Albrecht.

**ALBRECHT:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you for being here and thank you for stepping up. Have you ever actually attended any of these meetings yourself?

**BRANDIE NEEMANN:** Only in my early design years. I attended a meeting just to observe a relaxation request.

**ALBRECHT:** And how many-- how often do they meet?

**BRANDIE NEEMANN:** The board?

**ALBRECHT:** Um-hum.

**BRANDIE NEEMANN:** There-- I believe there's ten meetings set up throughout the year, as I think one of the previous appointees pointed out.

**ALBRECHT:** And do they go in different areas of the state--

**BRANDIE NEEMANN:** No.



**ALBRECHT:** --or do they always meet in Lincoln?

**BRANDIE NEEMANN:** I believe that they're always in Lincoln and I think they're usually at the Department of Transportation, but from what I've seen, there haven't been many meetings lately.

**ALBRECHT:** So let me ask you a question. If, if the Legislature decides to regroup and add a new highway or an addition to a highway that's currently there, how does that affect the overall transportation arena, if you will, if we take on two more new highways, which is suggested during this legislative session? How does that change things in your departments?

**BRANDIE NEEMANN:** Well, I think it's-- I'm not sure how it works for a-- forgive me, but a politically designated highway system, like to add additional miles to the highway system. I'm not familiar with how that would work.

**ALBRECHT:** I'm just saying if it wasn't already in the planning--

**BRANDIE NEEMANN:** Oh, OK.

**ALBRECHT:** --does that disrupt things for those in the Transportation Department?

**BRANDIE NEEMANN:** So if you're, if you're describing a potential request to study improvements on the high-- on an existing highway system, maybe U.S. 81, U.S. 20, I know that those are our hot topics these days. Is it disruptive? I don't know that it's disruptive. It's, it's work that has to be accomplished. Certainly, these are no small undertakings and resources are what they are to, to make those studies and to do those reviews, but it's-- so to that end, it's a, it's a work--

**ALBRECHT:** Right.

**BRANDIE NEEMANN:** --effort.

**ALBRECHT:** So I'll just ask you when you get on the board, to me, it's very important for the boots on the ground, those in both of these committees to be able to let us know if there's something that needs to be tweaked, worked on, or considered with new legislation. So I appreciate you coming in--

**BRANDIE NEEMANN:** Certainly.

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**ALBRECHT:** --and stepping up. Thanks.

**FRIESEN:** Thank you, Senator Albrecht. Senator Bostelman.

**BOSTELMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You may have mentioned earlier and I just didn't hear it. It's kind of hard to hear in this room sometimes. So are you filling the DOT position on the board? Is that the DOT position on the, on the commission you're filling?

**BRANDIE NEEMANN:** I'll be replacing Mick Syslo on the board.

**BOSTELMAN:** OK, thank you.

**BRANDIE NEEMANN:** Um-hum.

**FRIESEN:** Thank you, Senator Bostelman. Senator Moser.

**MOSER:** Have you done any work on Highway 30 from Columbus to Omaha?

**BRANDIE NEEMANN:** Have I personally?

**MOSER:** Yes.

**BRANDIE NEEMANN:** No. Personally, I have not done any work on Highway 30, but the department has.

**MOSER:** Darn. I was going to ask you questions about that.

**BRANDIE NEEMANN:** Oh, shoot.

**MOSER:** I'm just teasing you. Go ahead.

**FRIESEN:** Thank you, Senator Moser. Seeing no other questions, thank you for coming in and talking to us. With that, we'll ask for anyone wish to testify in favor? Seeing no one jumping up, anyone want to testify in opposition? Seeing none, anyone wish to testify in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, that will close the hearing on Brandie S. Neemann. Thank you very much for coming in and we will close the hearings for today.