

Comments from IASBO members:

Randy Dewey, Nampa School District: Kathy, any way we can get them to strike out the \$7.5m haircut and not do the phase out? Basically what the 85% does now is just take away from anyone that was above 85% prior to the haircut and that money goes back to the State and not back to Districts. We are looking for a re-distribution based on a fair formula, not trying to take budget out of the calculation. ☺ If we can eliminate the haircut, then Districts like West Ada that stand to lose a lot in the 85% would not be effected and a phase out would no longer be necessary.

Randy Dewey, Nampa School District: ☹ I don't know if I can support something that will actually take \$2m + out of the funding though. Seems like we can figure something creative out. Maybe a phase out of the \$7.5?

As I said before, this change isn't about making the pool of funds available for districts lower, it is for simplification. I don't believe this would be in our best interest to support unless we can do something with the haircut portion.

Chris James, Cassia Jt. School District #151: Thanks Mike. In section 8 they are still reducing transportation by the \$7,500,000 correct? The 50% reimbursement of overage for the next 2 years doesn't affect that?

Greg Alexander, Garden Valley School District #71: I am concerned that Garden Valley SD #71 might be losing money if we go away from the Block grant. We lose money every year on transportation. I wish I had enough time to pursue doing our own transportation.

Denise Uhlenkott, Cottonwood School District: Kathy, I do agree that this is a good start.

Varr Snedaker, Madison School District #321: I reviewed the language in the transportation bill. Moving back to 85% reimbursement for all costs will simplify the calculation somewhat so I am okay with that move. The move go give half of the amount some SDs will lose by moving from the block grant for 2 years helps to reduce the sting for those districts. The language sounds fine. It would be better if the legislature would consider reducing the \$7.5M reduction in paragraph (8) to help soothe some of the sting of losing the block grant. Also, if there is no intention to restore the \$7.5M at some point, why not change the language to reimburse at 77% or 76%, instead of 85% less a share of the \$7.5M (which is a little deceptive)?

Another issue with the transportation reimbursement that needs to be addressed sometime is the fact that lower cost "travel or extracurricular miles" currently subsidize the more expensive "route miles" which isn't fair, especially to smaller & rural school districts. I have talked to some superintendents who mistakenly think that moving back to 85% reimbursement for all costs will solve the problem. Unfortunately, those superintendents don't understand the details of the transportation funding and how lower cost travel miles dilute the cost/mile rate we should get for route miles, which in turn reduces our reimbursement. I have been told that many small, rural school districts would be hurt the most. Many have purchased coach buses to use to be able to separate out the costs, but I keep hearing that the SDE transportation staff are trying to put an end to the practice. It would be helpful if the SDE transportation staff would be transparent and give us an "official" statement instead of what appears to be sneaking around in the shadows. Business Managers should be allowed to be part of the discussion of the issue since few others have a real understanding of the nuances of the transportation funding.

Personally, I think the legislature should come up with a standard mileage rate to reimburse school districts for allowable bus miles and eliminate the practice of looking at every invoice every year as part of the "annual audit" by SDE transportation. The transportation audits are painful because they are so detailed and nitpicky, and I don't suppose the SDE staff enjoy the audits either.

Thanks for your work with the legislature. If you or someone else has questions on my suggestions, please let me know!