Wyoming Transportation Commission
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EDUCATION SESSION MINUTES

The Transportation Commission of Wyoming met in the I-80 Room of the WYDOT University Training Building in Cheyenne and via Zoom on April 15, 2026. Chair Lyman convened the education session at 2:00 p.m. The following members were present, constituting a quorum.

Chair Brandt Lyman, Rock Springs
Vice Chair Jim Willox, Douglas
Commissioner Susan Holmes, Sheridan
Commissioner Mark Hughes, Sundance
Commissioner Marlowe Scherbel, Afton
Commission Secretary Kimberly Chapman

Others present and participating in the meeting: Taylor Rossetti, Deputy Director/Support Services Administrator; Vince Garcia, GIS/ITS Program Manager; Gabe Gutierrez, GIS/ITS Quality Control Analyst; Nick Graf, GIS Supervisor; Jalynda McKay, GIS/ITS Analyst and Developer; Wesley Bybee, Assistant State Materials Engineer; Mike Kahler, Supervising Attorney General; MacKenzie Sewell, Assistant Attorney General; Doug McGee, Public Affairs; Senator Stephan Pappas; and Susan Elliott, Executive Assistant.

1. WYDOT Efforts to Reduce Blow Overs: Mr. Garcia introduced the project team, consisting of Gabe Gutierrez, Nick Graf, and Jalynda McKay. Mr. Gutierrez provided an overview of blow-over mitigation strategies, noting the severe impact of these incidents on public safety, emergency response hazards, and road closures. He cited an extreme wind event on March 12, 2026, which resulted in 32 recorded blow-overs.

   Mr. Gutierrez highlighted a strategic shift from subjective "high-profile vehicle" warnings toward data-driven restrictions. This transition integrates research from Dr. Noriaki Ohara of the University of Wyoming, which examines the physics of vehicle weight, geometry, and wind velocity to inform safety protocols. By moving away from ambiguous terminology, WYDOT now employs a precise algorithm to establish specific weight thresholds, such as closing roads to vehicles under 40,000 lbs based on real-time atmospheric conditions. These specific restrictions are communicated to motorists via Dynamic Message Signs (DMS) located at strategic decision-making points, ensuring drivers can access essential services or identify alternate routes before entering affected areas.

   Mr. Gutierrez discussed the ongoing challenges associated with implementing road restrictions, noting that closures are frequently enforced reactively after a blow-over

incident has already occurred. To deter violations, fines are set at $1,000 for a first offense and $2,500 for a second, with the potential for an added reckless driving charge. Despite the issuance of specific warnings, blow-over incidents have trended upward throughout 2025 and 2026, a trend attributed to increasingly severe wind seasons and driver non-compliance. Furthermore, the team identified critical gaps in the weight-based closure system, specifically in high-risk areas like Torrington, where a lack of weather sensors and Dynamic Message Signs hinders effective enforcement and communication.

Mr. Graf provided an update on current research initiatives, noting that the study has expanded to evaluate a broader range of vehicle types, including horse trailers and various camper configurations. Notably, the research indicated that medium-sized campers face a higher risk of instability than larger or smaller models. To physically mitigate these risks, WYDOT is testing specialized wind fences with varying levels of porosity to determine their effectiveness in altering wind profiles within high-risk zones. Additionally, a new data-sharing process has been established, allowing the Highway Patrol to report blow-over details—such as vehicle weight and driver English proficiency—more rapidly to WYDOT, facilitating real-time refinements to the restriction algorithm.

Mr. Garcia, Mr. Gutierrez, and Mr. Graf discussed their ongoing collaboration with counterparts in Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, and North Carolina to address shared regional challenges. During the discussion, Commissioners raised concerns regarding the readability of Dynamic Message Signs (DMS). Mr. Gutierrez acknowledged the complexities of effective messaging, including the constraints of character limits and the requirement for websites and applications to remain ADA-compliant. In response to these concerns, Commissioners suggested the implementation of push notifications to provide the public with real-time updates on changing road conditions.

2. Materials Lab Tour: Wes Bybee led the Commissioners on a tour of the Materials Lab, highlighting operations within the Chemistry, Asphalt, and Concrete labs, alongside the testing rooms and logistics area.