



A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY ON WAYS TO IMPROVE PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION SERVICE AND PUBLIC TRANSIT IN MONTANA; AND REQUIRING THAT THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY BE REPORTED TO THE 70TH LEGISLATURE.

WHEREAS, passenger rail, passenger air, public transit, and passenger bus services provide mobility for senior citizens, persons with disabilities, students, tourists, and businesspeople; and

WHEREAS, some communities in the state are poorly served by public transportation, and options for passenger transportation services in the state continue to decline; and

WHEREAS, the Hi-Line is Montana's major northern transportation corridor, consisting of U.S. Highway 2 and the BNSF Railway, and yet the local residents face challenges with the available methods of transportation. Air travel is another key method of transportation for Hi-Line residents to get to hospital appointments in Billings over 200 miles south in a timely manner, and the residents would benefit from increased air travel locations and options; and

WHEREAS, if state services are unavailable, many Montanans need local, tribal, or county transportation services for help getting to appointments for medical or other physical needs; and

WHEREAS, the Amtrak North Coast Hiawatha ceased operation through southern Montana in 1979, and transportation to and from the major population centers of southern Montana would be greatly enhanced by passenger rail service; and

WHEREAS, additional passenger transportation services will increase passenger transportation-related employment opportunities because of the need for upgraded infrastructure and operating personnel; and

WHEREAS, tourism is the State of Montana's second-largest industry and would be enhanced by improved passenger transportation services and public transit; and

WHEREAS, the Amtrak Empire Builder is one of the most popular long-distance passenger trains in the United States, and it is greatly needed for the citizens of Montana's Hi-Line who have limited public transportation options, but it is challenged by a lack of rail capacity that results in frequent delays; and

WHEREAS, there is currently no board or commission within the state that is charged with the sole responsibility of overseeing and advocating for passenger transportation services, including passenger rail, passenger air, public transit, and passenger bus services; and

WHEREAS, autonomous vehicles may provide one option for transportation needs in the state in the future, and more studies are needed to determine whether laws need to be updated to accommodate autonomous vehicles and to determine whether policies are necessary to address safety, licensing, and other issues of public concern.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee or statutory committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to investigate ways to improve passenger transportation and public transit services in the state, including but not limited to the establishment of a passenger transportation commission and a review of applicable laws that may need updating to allow the use of autonomous vehicles and provide for public safety.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the study is assigned to staff, any findings or conclusions be presented to and reviewed by an appropriate committee designated by the Legislative Council.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2026.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions, comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 70th Legislature.

- END -

I hereby certify that the within bill,
SJ 19, originated in the Senate.

Secretary of the Senate

President of the Senate

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2025.

Speaker of the House

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2025.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 19

INTRODUCED BY A. OLSEN, M. DUNWELL, G. HUNTER, D. FERN

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY ON WAYS TO IMPROVE PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION SERVICE AND PUBLIC TRANSIT IN MONTANA; AND REQUIRING THAT THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY BE REPORTED TO THE 70TH LEGISLATURE.