To: Highways and Transportation; Appropriations

MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE

By: Senator(s) Smith

To: Highways and Transportation; Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2323

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. (1) There is established a study committee to study the improvement freight rail service in Mississippi and the feasibility of high speed rail service in Mississippi. The study committee shall examine all aspects of freight rail service and high speed rail service and make recommendations regarding such examination to the Legislature on or before December 1, 2002.

(2) The study committee shall be composed of three (3) members appointed by the Governor, three (3) members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor and three (3) members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. In making their appointments the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall endeavor to achieve a diverse representation, with all geographical areas of the state being represented on the committee.

(3) Appointments shall be made within thirty (30) days after passage of this act. Within fifteen (15) days thereafter, on a day to be designated by the Governor, the study committee shall meet and organize by selecting from its membership a chairman and vice chairman. The vice chairman shall serve as secretary and shall be responsible for keeping all records of the study committee. A majority of the members of the study committee shall constitute a quorum. In the selection of its officers and the
adoption of rules, resolution and reports, and affirmative vote of a majority of the study committee is required. All members shall be notified in writing of all meetings, and such notices must be mailed at least five (5) days before the date on which a meeting is to be held.

(4) Subject to the availability of funds, for attending meetings of the study committee, members who are not legislators shall be compensated at the per diem rate authorized by Section 25-3-69, Mississippi Code of 1972, and shall be reimbursed in accordance with Section 25-3-41, Mississippi Code of 1972, for mileage and actual expenses incurred in attending meetings of the committee. If members of the Legislature are appointed to serve as members of the study committee, such legislative members shall be paid from the contingent expense fund of their respective house per diem in the same manner as provided for committee meetings when the Legislature is not in session. However, no per diem, mileage allowance or expense allowance may be paid for attending meetings of the committee while the Legislature is in session, and no per diem, mileage allowance or expense allowance may be paid without prior approval of the proper committee in the member's respective house. If a state employee is appointed as a member of the committee, such state employee shall not be eligible to receive per diem compensation. No study committee member may incur per diem, travel or other expenses unless previously authorized by vote at a meeting of the study committee, which action must be recorded in the official minutes of the meeting. Nonlegislative members may be paid from any funds made available to the study committee for that purpose.

(5) The study committee may utilize clerical and legal staff employed by the Mississippi Department of Transportation, the Office of the Governor, the Legislature and any other staff assistance made available to the committee. To effectuate the purpose of this act, any department, division, board, bureau,
commission or agency of the state or of any political subdivision
thereof shall at the request of the chairman of the study
committee, provide to the study committee such facilities,
assistance and data as will enable the special committee to carry
out its duties.

(6) Funding for the study committee may be provided from any
funds that may be appropriated by the Legislature for the expenses
of the study committee. The study committee may accept money from
any source, public or private, to be expended in implementing its
duties under this act.

(7) Upon presentation of its report to the Legislature
before the 2003 Regular Session, the study committee shall be
dissolved.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from
and after July 1, 2002.