

# TRANSPORTATION INTERIM COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2025-2026

Purpose: To help the TIC plan its interim and establish work priorities. When finalized, the work plan will provide guidance to the members, staff, and public on how the TIC will conduct its business throughout the interim. It will serve as a blueprint that allows the TIC to complete its work over the next 15 months.



Transportation Interim Committee

*Compiled by Becca Brown*

*Adopted by committee on September 12, 2025*

# COMMITTEE INFORMATION

## ABOUT THE COMMITTEE

The 2019 Legislature passed and approved [Senate Bill No. 226](#) establishing a Transportation Interim Committee. Historically, transportation matters were combined with revenue and tax policy and under the authority of the Revenue and Transportation Interim Committee. The Senate Highways and Transportation Standing Committee requested SB 226, and Senator Gordon Vance carried the bill. He stated in his testimony that it was important to split the subjects into separate committees to ensure that transportation, including the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), receives the attention it deserves.

The TIC is one of several interim committees established by law and required to meet in the months between regular legislative sessions. Interim committees provide oversight for the various state agencies, perform interim studies as needed and as assigned by the Legislative Council, and propose legislation for consideration at the next legislative session. The interim committees also give Montana's citizens an opportunity to provide testimony about their experiences with state government.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Interim committee members are appointed in accordance with [5-5-211, MCA](#).

Member	District & County	Email
Rep. Denise Baum	HD 45, Yellowstone County	Denise.Baum@legmt.gov
Rep. Curtis Cochran	HD 90, Mineral County	Curtis.Cochran@legmt.gov
Rep. Chip Fitzpatrick	HD 42, Big Horn County	Sidney.Fitzpatrick@legmt.gov
Rep. Greg Kmetz	HD 36, Custer County	Greg.Kmetz@legmt.gov
Rep. Zack Wirth	HD 17, Lewis and Clark County	Zack.Wirth@legmt.gov
Sen. Gregg Hunter	SD 15, Valley County	Gregg.Hunter@legmt.gov
Sen. Denley Loge	SD 45, Mineral County	Denley.Loge@legmt.gov
Sen. Andrea Olsen	SD 48, Missoula County	Andrea.Olsen@legmt.gov
Sen. Russ Tempel	SD 14, Liberty County	Russ.Tempel@legmt.gov

## COMMITTEE STAFF

The Legislative Services Division provides impartial, nonpartisan support to the Montana State Legislature, including committee staffing, administrative management, and legal and policy research.

Staff	Role	Phone	Email
Becca Brown	Committee Research Analyst	(406) 444-4421	rebecca.brown@legmt.gov
Joseph Carroll	Committee Attorney	(406) 444-3804	joseph.carroll@legmt.gov
Maddelyn Black	Committee Secretary	(406) 444-3594	maddelyn.black@legmt.gov

## COMMITTEE RULES

The Transportation Interim Committee is subject to the [Legislative Council's Rules, Procedures, and Guidelines for Interim Committees](#). This document structures the requirements for the work of the interim, including parliamentary procedures, legislative reimbursement, and use of staff. It also provides public notice and participation requirements.

## USE OF COMMITTEE STAFF

Legislative Council's rules require that the committee adopt a work plan by the conclusion of its second regular meeting. When the committee adds a topic to its approved work plan, it directs its research analyst to prioritize research relating to that topic. The research analyst's work to respond to a research request not included in the work plan may not exceed 16 hours, unless excess work is approved by the presiding officer and vice-presiding officer.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Members of the public provide comment on specific committee topics; time is also reserved at each meeting for public comment on any other matter within the jurisdiction of the Transportation Interim Committee. Public notice is given via email at least 10 calendar days in advance of a meeting. The presiding officer may establish time limits for public comment, if necessary.

Meeting materials, including agendas, are available on the TIC webpage:

<https://committees.legmt.gov/#/nonStandingCommittees/32>

Interested persons may also sign up to receive electronic meeting notifications at

<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/MTLSB/subscriber/new>.

Sign up for a participation portal account to submit comment or testify remotely: <https://participate.legmt.gov/>

## PROXY VOTES

The [Legislative Council's Rules, Procedures, and Guidelines](#) guide the use of proxy votes in interim committees. Generally, the use of proxies is discouraged. However, "for the exercise of a proxy to be valid, the deputized member shall hold a written proxy from the absent member." [*Legislative Council's Rule, page 2*] Unless the TIC approves a different proxy policy, the Legislative Council policy applies.

## MEETING DATES

The committee has adopted the following preliminary meeting dates:

- July 16, 2025
- September 12, 2025
- November 24, 2025
- January 23, 2026
- March 13, 2026
- May 11, 2026
- July 27, 2026
- September 11, 2026

The proposed schedule is based on the assumption that the committee will dedicate all of its meeting days to the main committee. If the committee creates subcommittees or work groups, meeting days for the main committee must be reduced to accommodate the subcommittee or work group. Subcommittees and work groups created by the committee must also be submitted to Legislative Council by August 15, 2025.

The Legislative Council also suggests that interim committees complete their work by September 15, 2026.

# COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

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## WHY DOES THE COMMITTEE NEED A WORK PLAN?

The Transportation Interim Committee is responsible under state law for monitoring the activities of the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) and the Motor Vehicles Division of the Department of Justice (MVD). The Legislative Council assigned one of the studies requested by the 69th Montana Legislature to the committee this interim. Committee members may pose additional topics for the committee to explore this interim.

This work plan details the committee's study and agency oversight duties for the interim, which runs from July 1, 2025 through September 15, 2026. It is a tool for the committee and its members, allowing them to prioritize their work and provide clear direction to staff. Whether conducting a study, overseeing its assigned agencies, reviewing ballot initiatives, or investigating a member topic, the committee research process follows a basic pattern:



Your work plan is the tool that allows you to plan and execute this **three-step research process** for **each** committee work plan topic.

The first phase happens early in the interim, when the committee hears presentations by people with experience and expertise; takes public comment from interested parties, who may offer specific suggestions; and reviews informational materials, such as staff research papers.

In the second phase, the committee uses this information to narrow its focus. Members identify specific aspects, ideas, or questions to examine in-depth. This phase helps members concentrate on the issues they consider to be of the greatest importance, and obtain any additional information needed to make final recommendations.

During the final stage, committee members analyze information and, if desired, take action. Potential solutions, including legislation, are usually reviewed and refined at multiple meetings.

*If the TIC chooses not to take action on a study, it should inform the Legislative Council of its recommendation.*

The depth of this three-step process is wholly dependent upon how much of its research analyst's FTE (full-time equivalent) the committee assigns to a topic. When it sets its priorities via the work plan, the committee must choose between breadth and depth: does it want to briefly study several issues, or thoroughly examine fewer topics?

## WORK PLAN TOPICS

The Transportation Interim Committee has **0.75 FTE** of research analyst staff time. When distributing this FTE across its work plan topics, the committee conveys its work plan priorities. Work plan topics include agency oversight and other duties prescribed by law, interim studies requested by the 69<sup>th</sup> Montana Legislature, and member topics.

This section reviews the entire menu of work plan topics available to the committee, which the committee prioritizes on **page 6**.

## AGENCY OVERSIGHT

Agency oversight is a required duty of the interim committee, but the committee may decide how much of its staff time to dedicate to this duty. “Agency oversight” is an umbrella term. Agency oversight duties include five specific tasks.

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### TASK 1 - ADMINISTRATIVE RULE REVIEW

Interim committees review administrative rule proposals of the agencies for which they have oversight responsibility. The committee's legal staff reviews MDT and MVD rulemaking notices and provides regular updates, noting any rules that may be out of compliance with the Montana Administrative Procedure Act (MAPA). That law allows interim committees to, among other things:

- obtain an agency's rulemaking records to review them for compliance;
- submit written recommendations on adopting, amending, or rejecting a rule;
- require that a rulemaking hearing be held;
- require an economic impact statement relating to a rule adoption; and
- poll the Legislature by mail to determine if a proposed rule is consistent with legislative intent.

Interim committees also may delay the adoption of proposed rules by objecting to proposals that members believe do not comply with the provisions of MAPA. The Speaker of the House and the Senate President may break a tie vote on any rule objection being considered by an interim committee (2-4-112, MCA).

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**Decision Point:** It is up to the Committee to decide whether to ask for a formal presentation on each rule review memorandum, or whether to have a discussion only if committee members have questions or concerns.

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### TASK 2 - PROGRAM MONITORING

The committee monitors MDT and MVD operations with specific attention to issues likely to require future legislative action, opportunities for improving the laws governing the agency's operation and programs, and experiences that Montanans have had with the agency that may be improved through legislative action.

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### TASK 3 - REVIEW OF ADVISORY COUNCILS AND REPORTS

At the request of any committee member, the committee may review statutorily created advisory councils and reports related to the agencies they oversee, to see if the councils or reports should be revised or repealed.

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### TASK 4 - REVIEW OF DRAFT LEGISLATION

The interim committee process allows for an early review of agency-requested legislation. Interim committees typically authorize the drafting of many state agency bills in advance of the November election, which frees up time for the Legislative Services Division

staff to concentrate on legislator bill draft requests after the election. Authorization to draft is not an endorsement of the legislation itself. Agency bills drafted as a result of this process must be introduced before the 2027 legislative session begins.

TASK 5 - REQUIRED REPORTS

MDT and MVD and other entities present a number of statutorily required reports to the committee. Unless otherwise directed in statute, reports to the legislature, including reports to specific interim committees, are biennial reports and need to be submitted in written form by September 1 of the year preceding a legislative session. A table of these required reports is available in **Appendix A**.

BALLOT INITIATIVE REVIEW

The statutory requirement for interim committee review of ballot initiatives is being litigated at the Montana Supreme Court. Committee staff will notify TIC when litigation is completed and if it has any duties in this area while the case is pending. If you have questions, please consult with the committee attorney.

Case: *Ellingson v. State*, Montana Supreme Court No. DA 25-0142 (Filed Feb. 18, 2025)

INDIVIDUAL MEMBER RESEARCH REQUESTS

Individual members of the committee may seek additional information on issues that fall under the jurisdiction of the TIC. These issues may be raised by constituents, may be emerging problems in Montana or other states, or may be of interest to a particular member. If the committee chooses not to pursue information on a topic, the individual committee member may submit a research request. Under rules adopted by the Legislative Council, a staff member may provide up to 16 hours of research for a request that is not included in a committee's work plan unless the presiding officer of the interim committee approves additional research time.

COMMITTEE LEGISLATION

An interim committee may, by vote, request **five (5)** bills on a partisan basis (only members from one party vote to request the draft), and an unlimited number of bill drafts on a bipartisan basis (members from more than one party vote to request the draft). Established by [Chapter 432, Laws of 2023 \(SB 176\)](#), increased by [Chapter 134, Laws of 2025 \(HB 142\)](#).

ASSIGNED STUDIES

When the Montana Legislature approves a study resolution, it requests that the topic be examined by an appropriate interim committee. The 69<sup>th</sup> Montana Legislature requested 36 studies this interim, which its members ranked after *sine die* via legislative poll. At its meeting in June of 2025, the Legislative Council distributed the 36 studies across several committees and councils, assigning each study based on its alignment with a committee’s policy area. One study falls within the jurisdiction of TIC.

A study assignment is not a compulsory duty – the committee may include all, some, or none of the studies in its work plan. The committee may also elect to narrow the scope of a requested study. Please see the preliminary study outlines (PSOs) for more information, including estimated staff FTE. The committee may elect to assign more or less staff FTE to a study than used in the study’s PSO. See **Appendix B**, Staff FTE Decision Matrix.

Rank (out of 36)	Assigned Study Resolution	Poll Points
27	SJ 19: Joint resolution to study public transportation	789

## MEMBER TOPICS & EMERGING ISSUES

In addition to its agency oversight duties and assigned interim studies, TIC may wish to explore topics proposed by individual members. Member topics adopted for consideration by the committee must be included in its work plan.

Members may propose investigation of emerging issues at any time during the interim. Agencies may also request that the Committee study an emerging issue that has resulted from court decisions, federal actions, or another cause.

Emerging issues are not necessarily member issues and may be raised by an agency or by staff. However, to be on the agenda, the presiding officer or other TIC member must request agenda time. Staff resources are limited, so additions to a work plan must be accompanied by deletions to retain scheduling balance.

Topic	Description / Considerations
<b>Autonomous vehicles (AVs)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2025 <a href="#">HB 97 (Wirth)</a></li> <li>Learn about the ongoing MDT safety study, data, and reports</li> <li>Review previous TIC data, statistics, and informational witnesses</li> </ul>
<b>Areas of concern on MT roads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a “catch-all” topic to encompass various identified issues across MT</li> <li>MDT project prioritization</li> </ul>
<b>Fuel tax needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditional gas / diesel / aviation fuel</li> <li>Alternative fuels / electric vehicle charging stations</li> <li>Updates in technology contribute to changes in fuel tax</li> </ul>
<b>Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) fees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Last updated in 1993</li> <li>Improvements in technology / effects on roadways</li> </ul>
<b>Highway construction/ maintenance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding</li> <li>MT contractor bids / alternative contracting</li> <li>MDT project prioritization</li> </ul>
<b>Highway 212</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>East of Billings between Crow Agency and the Wyoming border</li> <li>Passing lanes near Lame Deer area</li> <li>Commerce, freight traffic</li> <li>Constituent safety</li> <li>Jurisdiction, authority, patrols</li> </ul>
<b>Motor Carrier Services (MCS) officer enforcement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statutory requirements and authority of MCS</li> <li>Overlapping jurisdictions, cross-deputization agreements</li> </ul>
<b>Tow Trucks / Wreckers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2025 <a href="#">HB 223 (Schillinger)</a>, <a href="#">SB 113 (Yakawich)</a>, and <a href="#">SB 454 (Noland)</a></li> <li>Insurance costs, interstate cleanup requirements and reimbursement</li> </ul>
<b>Wildlife corridors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectiveness of existing corridors</li> <li>Determination and implementation of new corridors</li> </ul>

## WORK PLAN PRIORITIZATION

The Transportation Interim Committee must distribute its assigned **0.75 FTE** of research analyst time to its work plan topics.

See **Appendix B**, Staff FTE Decision Matrix, and the preliminary study outline (PSO) for each assigned interim study.

Work Plan Topic	Required?	Assigned FTE
Agency oversight (AO)	Yes	0.08
AO 1 - Administrative rule review	Yes	0.02
AO 2 - Program monitoring	Yes	0.03
AO 3 - Review of advisory councils and reports	No	0.01
AO 4 - Review of draft legislation	Yes	0.01
AO 5 - Required reports	Yes	0.01
SJ 19: Joint resolution to study public transportation	No	0.30
Member topic: Autonomous Vehicles (AVs)*	No	0.01
Member topic: Areas of concern on MT roads*	No	0.02
Member topic: Fuel tax needs*	No	0.03
Member topic: Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) fees*	No	0.04
Member topic: Highway construction/maintenance – funding, contracting, MDT project prioritization*	No	0.10
Member topic: Highway 212*	No	0.04
Member topic: Motor Carrier Services (MCS) officer enforcement*	No	0.02
Member topic: Tow trucks / wreckers*	No	0.02
Member topic: Wildlife corridors*	No	0.01
Emerging issues	No	0.08
Total FTE		0.75 FTE

\*The work plan must enumerate each included member topic and assign staff FTE to each.



## ALLOCATION OF COMMITTEE TIME

The TIC meets several times during an interim to work on studies, statutory duties, and member topics. At the end of the interim, the committee will have developed findings and recommendations for one or more reports. The Committee may have also drafted legislation.

Committees sometimes travel outside of Helena to carry out activities either related to a specific study or to the committee's general agency oversight duties. Legislative Council rules state that interim committee meetings are held in the Capitol "unless otherwise designated by the presiding officer." Meetings held outside of Helena generally cost more than those held in Helena because the committee budget must also pay for the costs of staff travel. As a result, the committee may need to hold fewer meetings to accommodate the additional costs of travel if it chooses to hold any meetings outside of Helena.

This agenda may change once the Committee identifies specific studies and member topics. The proposed meeting schedule (page 3) and work plan timeline below include one proposed two-day meeting in case the Committee elects to conduct field trips for studies or member topics.

### PROPOSED TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES

July 2025	September 2025	November 2025	January 2026	March 2026	May 2026	July 2026	September 2026
Draft work plan	Finalize work plan	Revise work plan, as necessary					
Begin statutory duties	Continue statutory duties						
Consider study resolution	Begin study	Gather background	Identify options			Consider draft findings, recommendations	Finalize findings, recommendations
Prioritize member topics	Explore member topics						
					Propose draft legislation	Review draft legislation	Approve legislation for pre-introduction
						Approve agency legislation for pre-introduction	Approve agency legislation for pre-introduction
							Receive required reports from agencies

*\*All dates are tentative and subject to change by the committee\**

## APPENDIX A – TABLE OF REQUIRED REPORTS

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This table lists reports sent to the Transportation Interim Committee.

Reports are grouped by reporting entity; when an entity submits multiple reports, the reports are then organized by statute. Reports added during 69<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session are not yet codified in statute, so the statute field contains the bill number which created it.

Report	Reporting Entity	Deadline	Statute
Annual Performance Report	MDT	Oct 1, 2025 (Annual)	<u><a href="#">2-12-105</a></u>
Biodiesel Tax Refunds	MDT	Sept 2026 (Biennial)	<u><a href="#">15-70-433</a></u>
Motor Fuels Taxes Cooperative Agreement Negotiations Status	MDT	Sept 2026 (Biennial)	<u><a href="#">15-70-450</a></u>
Special Fuels Inspections	MDT	Sept 2026 (Biennial)	<u><a href="#">61-10-154(8)</a></u>
Emergency Medical Services Grants*	MDT	Nov 2026 (Biennial)	<u><a href="#">61-2-109</a></u>
Multistate highway transportation agreement reports*	Cooperating Committee		<u><a href="#">61-10-1101</a></u>

\*Report sent to legislature per statute; TIC has agency oversight of reporting entity

## APPENDIX B – STAFF FTE DECISION MATRIX (UPDATED 9/12/25 TO REFLECT ADOPTED TOPICS/FTE)

### THE DRAFT DECISION MATRIX

The TIC Work Plan Decision Matrix provides a side-by-side comparison of topics and allows for review of time allocations to each topic. This draft work plan is used in conjunction with it and includes estimates for total staff time available to the TIC. However, please note that many topics also require meeting time for updates, panel presentations, and committee discussions.

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Review the potential topics, including assigned studies, statutory duties, and any member-suggested topics presented with this work plan or suggested during the committee's work session.
2. Prioritize the topics you want the TIC to focus on this interim.
3. Select the FTE you wish to allocate to each of the topics in which you're interested. The TIC may adjust the proposed FTE and corresponding level of study. Because TIC shares staff with the School Funding Interim Commission and the Education Interim Committee, **the total allocation available is 0.75 FTE**. The options you choose should total no more than 0.75 FTE. Use the draft decision matrix to assist you with this process.

Topic	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D
SJ 19: JOINT RESOLUTION TO STUDY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION (Ranked 27 out of 36)	<b>0.5 FTE</b> <i>See preliminary study outline</i>	<b>0.25 FTE</b> <i>See preliminary study outline</i>	<b>0.1 FTE</b> <i>See preliminary study outline</i>	<b>No Action</b>
MEMBER TOPICS*  <i>*The work plan must enumerate each member topic and assign it an individual proportion of staff FTE.</i>  <i>The FTE estimates in this row are <u>per member topic</u>.</i>	<b>0.1 FTE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Two to three panels or presentations</li><li>Two staff papers, comparative analyses, presentations, or other detailed research</li></ul>	<b>0.05 FTE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Panel presentation</li><li>Staff paper</li></ul>	<b>0.01 FTE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Panel presentation</li></ul>	<b>No Action</b>
Member topic: Autonomous Vehicles (AVs)*			<b>0.01 FTE</b>	
Member topic: Areas of concern on MT roads*			<b>0.02 FTE</b>	
Member topic: Fuel tax needs*			<b>0.03 FTE</b>	
Member topic: Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) fees*		<b>0.04 FTE</b>		
Member topic: Highway construction/maintenance – funding, contracting, MDT project prioritization*	<b>0.10 FTE</b>			
Member topic: Highway 212*		<b>0.04 FTE</b>		
Member topic: Motor Carrier Services (MCS) officer enforcement*			<b>0.02 FTE</b>	
Member topic: Tow trucks / wreckers*			<b>0.02 FTE</b>	
Member topic: Wildlife corridors*			<b>0.01 FTE</b>	
Emerging issues		<b>0.08 FTE</b>		

Topic	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D
AGENCY OVERSIGHT TASK 1: ADMINISTRATIVE RULE REVIEW			<b>0.02 FTE</b>  Research analyst performs minimal administrative duties related to administrative rule review.	
AGENCY OVERSIGHT TASK 2: PROGRAM MONITORING		<b>0.05 FTE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductory presentation by MDT/MVD</li> <li>• Presentations and updates from MDT/MVD at each committee meeting</li> <li>• Monitoring or research into aspects of a program or agency, if TIC chooses</li> <li>• Staff attends Helena-area agency meetings and presentations as possible</li> </ul>	<b>0.02 FTE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductory presentation by MDT/MVD</li> <li>• Additional presentations from MDT/MVD as requested by TIC</li> <li>• Limited monitoring or research into aspects of a program or agency, if TIC chooses</li> </ul>	
AGENCY OVERSIGHT TASK 3: REVIEW OF ADVISORY COUNCILS AND REPORTS		<b>0.01 FTE*</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written list of required reports and advisory councils</li> <li>• Written summary of specific council, commission, or other entity's duties, functions, and operations</li> <li>• Agency presentation on work of the council or commission</li> </ul> <p>*Add 0.01 FTE per additional council, commission, etc. examined; particularly large commissions or councils may require additional FTE</p>	<b>0.005 FTE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written list of required reports and advisory councils</li> </ul>	<b>No Action</b>
AGENCY OVERSIGHT TASK 4: REVIEW OF AGENCY DRAFT LEGISLATION			<b>0.01 FTE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee reviews legislative proposals from MDT/MVD in summer of 2026; may authorize drafting of the legislation for preintroduction</li> </ul>	
AGENCY OVERSIGHT TASK 5: REQUIRED REPORTS		<b>0.01 FTE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MDT/MVD presents up to four reports at a regular TIC meeting</li> <li>• Follow-up research by staff on up to two reports</li> </ul>	<b>0.005 FTE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive copy of each report</li> </ul>	

MINIMUM FTE FOR AGENCY OVERSIGHT: 0.055 FTE (Option D, no action, for Task 3)

MAXIMUM FTE AGENCY OVERSIGHT: 0.1 FTE base + 0.01 FTE per each additional commission reviewed in Task 3 – 0.1 FTE total to examine one commission, 0.14 to examine five commissions.