

**TESTIMONY BEFORE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

REGARDING HOUSE BILL 2556
RELATING TO THE SAFETY CORRIDOR ACT**

February 14, 2012

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

I am Jerry Younger, Deputy Secretary and State Transportation Engineer for the Kansas Department of Transportation. KDOT is pleased to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2556.

Safety corridor legislation is being sought after a committee of citizens and leaders from Douglas and Johnson counties was formed following the tragic death of 5-year-old Cainan Shutt of Eudora who died in a crossover median traffic crash on K-10 in April last year. This committee, formed at the request of Governor Brownback, has urged KDOT to seek the ability to name K-10 a safety corridor as a means to reducing the number of serious and fatal crashes that occur along this and other corridors throughout our state.

Goals of Safety Corridor Programs

KDOT is committed to keeping drivers traveling through Kansas as safe as possible. To the extent that we know certain corridors have higher serious and fatal accident rates, the safety corridor program will be aimed at alerting drivers that they are entering a high accident area in hopes that this knowledge will encourage drivers to pay attention, slow down, and drive safely through the area.

What would the Kansas Safety Corridor Program look like?

KDOT may designate a safety corridor at the recommendation of the Executive Safety Council. The Executive Safety Council is currently responsible for the Kansas Strategic Highway Safety Plan. For those corridors that are within the corporate limits of a city, the city would need to pass a resolution to the Executive Safety Council, urging designation. The Secretary would be required to report to the legislature each year on the implementation and operation of the safety corridor program.

A driver traveling through a safety corridor would be alerted that they are entering a safety corridor and that fines are increased in these areas by roadway signage (please see attachment A). KDOT will also use speed trailers to draw additional attention to increased enforcement. Any driver stopped for a

moving violation within a safety corridor zone will incur a doubled fine. This fine would be collected by city, county, or municipal courts and then turned over to the state. The additional funds would then be used for enhanced enforcement, signing, education and other safety strategies along the designated safety corridors.

The program would begin with K-10 and US-54 through Wichita. Wichita and Eudora officials have been involved in crafting the legislation, in the interest of improving safety along their respective corridors.

For example, Wichita had 1,444 crashes over three years (2008-2010) within a 13 mile segment of US-54. This crash rate is three times the statewide average.

Other States with Safety Corridor Programs

The Midwest Transportation Consortium in 2008 studied safety corridors and found that 13 states have similar safety corridor programs and many of those have seen tremendous success in reducing injury and fatal traffic crashes.

In addition, the University of Missouri-Columbia's Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering found that since New Mexico has instituted a safety corridor along US 82, fatal crashes declined by 100% in just the first year that the safety corridor program was in place, and between 2002-2007 there was a 42.3% decline in total crashes in all of New Mexico's safety corridors. New Jersey, who passed safety corridor program back in 2003 has seen a downward trend in total crashes of approximately 3 percent per year since the safe corridors program has been in place. Virginia's safety corridor program has brought an 11 percent reduction in all crashes along I-81.

As other states' programs have shown, by designating safety corridors, increasing fines and enforcement, drivers change their driving habits. The change can result in a reduced number of fatal and serious crashes. Reducing these instances will make Kansas a safer and better place to travel and do business. We ask that you please support SB 342.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee today. I would be happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.