



Stimulating Economic Vitality Through Leadership in Infrastructure Development

800 SW Jackson St, Suite 808
Topeka, KS 66612
(785) 409-6500
www.economiclifelines.com

March 15, 2018

Proponent Testimony Regarding HB 2775

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Transportation Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to appear before you today on behalf of Economic Lifelines in support of House Bill 2775. It is a great pleasure for us to be here to support the legislature building a vision for the transportation system in the state of Kansas.

Transportation is a key economic driver for communities throughout our state. We have at least 23 projects that are currently delayed with no vision for how to begin the process of re-establishing a timeline to get those projects back to construction. We know that there are several counties that haven't yet seen the completion of the \$8m promise that was made during the 2010 Transportation Works for Kansas program.

Economic Lifelines spent the legislative interim traveling the state and meeting with more than 300 Kansans to discuss their concerns, needs, and opinions about transportation in Kansas and a few things were very clear to us.

First, there is a great deal of frustration and not just with the 23 outstanding projects, but frustration that there is no plan to begin a path forward on innovation to get those items back on the list. Additionally, while we have a backlog of 23 projects that haven't happened, we have needs that continually emerge. We know there are safety concerns along highways throughout the state. We also know that due to the limited funding the agency has much less of an ability to respond should a large developer or business that may want to locate here but potentially need infrastructure improvements. Some hold out hope for a federal infrastructure package, but the fact remains that even if a federal infrastructure package were here today, and with our shovel ready projects, we don't realistically have state matching funds to be able to capture those federal dollars.

The second item that we gleaned from our discussions around the state is that the current uncertainty with transportation funding has resulted in a lack of dialog among all stakeholders. This task force will lead the effort to re-establish that dialog and actively solicit the public to provide input to the legislature directly on the infrastructure needs.

The third item that is important is that the landscape of infrastructure investments is changing rapidly. We aren't dealing with the same discussion that we were in 2009. With innovations in autonomous travel, ride-sharing programs, changing vehicle fuel types, transit and mobility to job access, and smart cities, the information available to us today to begin visioning for our future creates a need for us to take a deeper look into our prioritization. With the newer information available to us today, this gives us an opportunity to re-set the vision for the future of transportation in our state.

We hope that such a committee could drive innovation for Kansas infrastructure alongside hosting the discussion regarding the need to get a realistic handle on the realities of the state highway fund and how to ensure that the funds for transportation are used as they are intended in the future, not as a bank to fund budget shortfalls.

This committee knows well the struggles that transportation is faced with today, with most all of the sales tax funds intended for transportation transferred to pay for other expenses. And while we were encouraged by the action taken by the legislature last session to address the State General Fund needs, and address the most pressing maintenance issues in our state with bonding authority, it was clear that the long-term visioning is what is most desperately needed at this time.

We would raise a couple of issues for the committees' further consideration, first the prescribing of the sub-committees can be limiting to the overall issues that the committee might like to explore. Most of the other task force legislation that has come through the house gives the committee full flexibility to establish sub-committee groups based on full committee discussion.

Additionally, we would recommend a clarification, as the bill is currently written we believe that all stakeholder at-large appointments could come from one organization, and we don't believe that is the intent but could be addressed with a simple clarification that only one at-large stakeholder appointment can come from each of the groups.

Again, we thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and we ask that the committee consider endorsing the intent of House Bill 2775 and the process to build a vision for transportation in Kansas.

Respectfully,

Tara Mays
Economic Lifelines
www.economiclifelines.com

Economic Lifelines is the statewide coalition of business organizations and community groups which have provided the grassroots support for comprehensive transportation programs in Kansas for over 30 years. Our members understand that the economic development and jobs generated by comprehensive transportation programs are vital to the stability and growth of the economy and our communities in Kansas and the safety of the traveling public.