Public Works & Utilities
CITY OF WICHITA

<u>Testimony HB 2588, FORWARD Transportation Program</u>

Date: February 18, 2020

To: Chairman Waymaster and the House Appropriations Committee

From: City of Wichita – Gary Janzen, P.E., City Engineer/Assistant Director of Public Works & Utilities

Subject: Testimony in Favor of HB 2588, FORWARD Transportation Program

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important matter. The City of Wichita stands strongly in favor of the proposed legislation for transportation improvement across our state.

Wichita is the largest city in Kansas and Sedgwick County is the second-largest county in Kansas by population. The 2020 estimated Wichita metro population is expected to approach 700,000. Wichita is the regional center of business, education and healthcare for the South-Central Kansas region of ten rural and urban counties that comprise 27% of the state's population. The Wichita area is a market center that has grown tremendously due to its regional, national and international trade in aviation, agricultural and petroleum products. A few of its largest employers include Spirit Aerosystems, Koch Industries and McConnell Air Force Base. The city is a major trucking hub due to its high concentration of manufacturing and role as a regional marketing center. Sixteen national and regional interstate common carriers have local terminal facilities in the Wichita area.

Our city is bisected by one of the few east-west corridors to traverse the state, with portions of US-54/400 improved to freeway standards over the last twenty years, primarily with local funds. While TWORKS funding did provide a needed boost for improvements that are nearing completion, much more is needed to provide the necessary facilities for freight movement, commerce and regional connectivity. As the cities of Andover and Goddard continue to grow and US-54 is expanded in other parts of the state, upgrading to freeway standards through the Wichita city limits will be one of the most critical components.

Interstate 135 divides the city north-south, providing a vital connecting link to the Mexico and Canada borders, through the heart of the country. The most critical interchange in the metropolitan area, linking I-135, I-235, K-96 and K-254 (the "North Junction") has long outlived its original design and is now considered the top state-wide transportation priority by KDOT and all south-central Kansas communities. The Cost Share program awarded funding for an initial phase of North Junction improvements, but more is needed to improve safety and congestion for this regionally significant facility.

We support reasonable and thoughtful expansion of the Secretary's authority to utilize alternate delivery methods, for more efficient and possibly cost effective delivery to communities. Wichita will continue to explore options for federal grant funding related to major transportation facilities in our city, and many of those opportunities include funding obligation timelines that could only be met by an alternative delivery method like design-build.

The proposed legislation includes a rolling program, whereby projects are selected for development and construction every two years. This proposal is extremely valuable to communities of our size for responding to emerging needs and providing maximum flexibility into the future. The legislation also proposes an increase in connecting link maintenance payments to $5,000 per year, per lane mile. With multiple connecting links in and out of our city, this proposal is greatly needed to help us maintain highway sections that are carrying more and heavier truck traffic on a regular basis.

As the largest city in Kansas, we cannot afford to wait any longer for needed transportation investments. The Wichita region, along with the entire state, will be at a disadvantage for recruiting and retaining businesses as long as the transportation funding and project pipeline remains empty.

For all these reasons, we enthusiastically request that the Committee advance HB 2588 to the full House. Thank you for your consideration.