

February 14, 2020

Department of  
Public Works:  
Engineering Division



Re: Testimony Regarding House Bill 2588 and Senate Bill 375

201 East Sixth, P.O. Box 426  
Newton, Kansas 67114-0426

Dear Chairperson and Committee Members:

It is imperative that a new transportation plan be implemented in our state. Without it, our highways will fall in disrepair and our local roadways and bridges, airports, railroads, and other transportation systems will continue to deteriorate. New technology will also race ahead of our infrastructure capabilities and development interest will look elsewhere if we do not act now with funding to support improvements to our failing system. Preservation of what we have and new improvements for today's populations and future growth must be addressed.

FORWARD, the proposed state transportation program developed by Secretary of Transportation Julie Lorenz, Kansas Department of Transportation staff, hundreds of local agencies (cities and counties), and endless supporters of transportation improvements is the way to address the transportation needs throughout the State of Kansas. I urge you to support this program for the people of Kansas.

More people are traveling on local roadways, but funding dollars passed down from the state have not increased at all. In fact, the ability to fund improvements has grown increasingly more difficult with recent tax lids. Vehicle miles traveled within city limits around the state have increased by 6% over the last 10 years. There are 19,300 bridges statewide owned by cities and counties. Approximately 1/2 of these local bridges are 50+ years old, but only \$8M per year is provided to local agencies to assist with repairs, and these numbers haven't increased. However, concrete prices in Newton, Kansas alone have increased by over 2% per year since 2008.

City Connecting Links had not seen any increase since 1999 until this year. However, to maintain constant purchasing power a 50% increase was needed. We only saw about a 30% increase. And this amount doesn't come close to covering all the expenses of maintaining these state highways traveling through our communities.

As fuel prices rise and people try to get more physically active, Kansans turn to bicycling as a mode of transportation. This helps keep vehicle numbers lower on roadways which helps defer expansion & maintenance costs. However, safety issues abound and funding for bicycle facilities has decreased. According to 2016 Kansas Traffic Crash Facts, 365 crashes statewide involved pedal cyclists at a cost of \$47,387,400. We must do better.

When industrial or commercial prospects call on our community, access to major highways and roadway quality are at the top of the list of questions. Without quality transportation infrastructure, our tax base can't grow, and our citizens don't have job options. We as a state must keep transportation high on the priority list and fund a new program.

These examples plus many others show that funding a state transportation plan is important to all of us in the state. Without increased funding, preservation of existing facilities and improvements to meet changing demands, we cannot sustain what we have and plan for future generations. Please support FORWARD and take Kansas transportation into the future!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Suzanne C. S. Loomis".

Suzanne C. S. Loomis, P.E.

City Engineer/Director Public Works