

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

PROPONENT TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2373: CREATING THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROGRAM

March 19, 2019

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

I am Julie Lorenz, Acting Secretary for the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT). I am here today to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 2373 creating the Transportation Planning Program.

I would like to thank Chairwoman McGinn and Chairman Proehl and all the Kansas Transportation Vision Task Force members. Twelve meetings were held across the state last fall, and their work lays the foundation for the future of transportation in Kansas.

Joint Legislative Transportation Task Force recommendations: This bill is key to implementing several Task Force recommendations. Before speaking to a few of the specifics, I want to acknowledge and underscore the importance of their overarching recommendation that consistent and reliable transportation funding is critical to the health of our transportation system and necessary to support our state's economy. KDOT largely stopped working in 2015 and 2016 on T-WORKS projects, the state bonded for light preservation actions and no long-term planning has been completed. Consequently, the health of our highway system is in decline and the State is not well positioned to take advantage of economic opportunities nor increased federal funds should those be made available.

The work of the Task Force has reversed this trend. With this bill, we're now talking about the future of transportation again – and communities, stakeholders and KDOT greatly appreciate your direction to look forward.

Preserve the asset: At more than \$30 billion, our highway system is one the State's most valuable assets. Maintaining the surface and subsurface condition of that system is rightfully the top priority

of the Task Force. KDOT strongly supports this priority, and the emphasis on both surface and subsurface condition.

Complete T-WORKS: The Task Force also recommended completing the 21 delayed T-WORKS projects before constructing additional modernization or expansion projects; at the same time, the Task Force also recognized the importance of responding to economic development opportunities and taking advantage of federal grant funds if they become available. The language in the bill accomplishes both.

The Governor's proposed budget for FY2020 and intention to close the bank of KDOT by 2023 depending on revenues and expenditures, supports these priorities by allowing KDOT to:

- Invest \$400 million in preservation and complete four T-WORKS projects in 2020
- Fully fund preservation, let all delayed T-WORKS projects and construct a few new projects by 2023.

The bill also looks beyond T-WORKS.

Modernize Transportation delivery: The Task Force heard testimony and reviewed lists of projects totaling over \$18B. Clearly, the State will never be able to afford all those communities' wants and needs. The Task Force recommended KDOT refine criteria for project selection and prioritization, including emphasis on practical improvements, removing infrastructure from the state highway system, identifying priority corridors and including local participation. KDOT supports these additional criteria, and as the Department conducts local consultation this summer and fall, we will work with communities and transportation stakeholders to develop the criteria.

Alternative delivery methods are an essential tool to allow for efficient construction of specific projects. KDOT has already started conversations with transportation stakeholders to create a proposal to bring forward next session. To provide an example of why this tool is important, let me tell you about Turner Diagonal. The Unified Government of Wyandotte County (UG) brought together the private, state and local funds to apply for a federal BUILD grant. The project is multi-modal, supports economic development and improves freight flow, particularly around the Amazon fulfillment center. In order to be competitive and secure the federal grant, the application set an aggressive timetable of opening to traffic by fall 2020 and alternative delivery is needed to meet the schedule. US DOT has been working to expedite project delivery and alternative delivery is a path for future projects.

Transportation Technology Advancements: The Task Force also heard about innovative technology in the transportation industry, and this bill directs KDOT to study and implement programs which

leverage new transportation technology. To be competitive, Kansas must not close our minds or borders to technology. We're doing some exciting work related to technology enabling more efficient truck parking and drone experimentation to keep us at the forefront of aviation, and there are many other areas in which we need to work with partners going forward.

Local Bridge program: With nearly 25,000 bridges in Kansas and about 20,000 of them on the local system, the Task Force heard in every meeting from communities how much they need the local bridge program to be reinstated. KDOT funded a one-year, \$10M pilot program in 2015 with outstanding results. Seventy-six local bridges were repaired or replaced, and 110 bridges were removed from the system. This is a program that can help create a more sustainable system, by reducing maintenance responsibilities or increasing capacity of bridges where necessary. Governor Kelly's FY 2020 proposed budget, if passed, will allow for implementation of this program, and we've already started discussions with the Kansas Association of Counties to refine the program based on experiences in 2015.

County Investment Guarantee: The Task Force also recommended continuing the \$8 M investment of state funds in each county over the 10-year life of the new transportation plan. This guarantee encompasses all transportation investment, including highway or local road construction or preservation, transit, aviation or any other transportation projects. KDOT supports including this as a goal for the next transportation program. The State needs an integrated rural and urban transportation system that allows safe and seamless transportation of people and goods, and we must ensure that the system overall is meeting the needs of the state.

HB 2373 sets the foundation for the State to complete T-WORKS, but more importantly, the State can start to turn the page to develop the Kansas transportation system for the future. KDOT is eager to work collaboratively with communities and our industry partners as we begin our long-range planning and local consultation process. Thank you for this bill – for stopping the decline and setting the stage for future success.

I am happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.