

MINUTES OF THE SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Les Donovan at 8:30 A.M. on March 16, 2005 in Room 527-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:  
Anthony Hensley- excused  
Vicki Schmidt - excused

Committee staff present:  
Hank Avila, Kansas Legislative Research Department  
Bruce Kinzie, Revisors of Statutes  
Maggie Breen, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:  
Colonel Seck, Superintendent, Kansas Highway Patrol  
Secretary Deb Miller, Kansas Department of Transportation  
Secretary Roderick Bremby, Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Others attending:  
See attached list.

Colonel Seck, Superintendent, Kansas Highway Patrol, said he would just start off with some startling statistics. In 2004, four-hundred and fifty-six men, women and children were killed in motor vehicle crashes on Kansas roadway, two thousands others suffered disabling injuries, and nearly twenty-three thousand more suffered non-incapacitating injuries. In Kansas, on average, more than one person is killed every day in motor vehicle-related crashes and every 21 minutes, someone is injured.

As a Highway Patrol Superintendent, he is all too familiar with the toll these traffic deaths and injuries take on families and friends. Seeing the results of this strengthens every Kansas Highway Patrol officer to do what they can to prevent these incidents. To the public they serve, it may not seem as important until they become personally involved. He, and his colleagues, Secretary Miller and Secretary Bremby are banning together trying to find additional ways to deal with the epidemic. A handout titled "Stop The Epidemic" with comments from all three plus a Stop the Epidemic Fact Sheet were handed out. (Attachments 1 and 2)

Secretary Miller said they had their first public safety forum in Colby last night to help raise awareness of the problem, to listen, and to start a dialogue in order to gather ideas so that the very best and most effective program can be established. KDOT administers federal safety funds that flow to the state. Many of the dollars go to law enforcement or highway patrol and she thinks it legitimate to step back and ask if we are getting the best use we can out of these dollars. We need to ask if we have gaps in our laws, in our enforcement techniques, and in our educational approaches. Secretary Miller said they were looking at a wide range of things. She noted that typically rural states have higher fatality rates than urban states. She noted that this is not only a highway issue but also a public health issue. Our state is fortunate to have a well-funded highway program and that has helped our statistics however they have discovered that ninety-nine percent of the injuries and deaths are caused by driver error. She reported that a spokesman from the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration has said that, in this country, if we can reach 90% use of seatbelts, we would reduce traffic fatalities by 34 %. Highway fatality is the number one killer of children, of teenagers and of people under the age of thirty-four. Thirty-seven percent of all crashes in Kansas occur in rural areas accounting for seventy-five percent of all crash fatalities statewide. She said one of the things being done currently is the highway patrol has 7 trailers and goes around and teaches parents, teachers and children how to use booster seats and how to properly install infant seats.

Senator O'Connor stated her concern that more needs to be done in the schools noting that there are many inexpensive ways to distribute educational materials there. She also noted that public service announcements were very effective. Senator O'Connor pointed out that 7 trailers weren't very many for 450,000 students.

Secretary Roderick Bremby, KDHE, said that Kansas is fortunate in that our timing is spectacular. A new health officer, Dr. Howard Rodenberg, has just been hired by the state. He has staffed trauma units in the past. He is an old emergency room doctor and has been teaching emergency room medicine. He staffed the trauma

## CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE Senate Transportation Committee at 8:30 A.M. on March 16, 2005 in Room 527-S of the Capitol.

center at the Daytona Beach Speedway. He's a certified NASA flight instructor because with the shuttle launches he was training folks to be able to respond to incidents. So, he understands what this is all about. He is very powerful and convincing when he stands up in front of folks and says "I have had to put people back together." Not only does he have that background, but in terms of strong public health infectious disease he's had some experience in Central Africa. We are well positioned, as a state, on the issue we're presenting today and in other public health issues.

We titled our presentation today "Stop the Epidemic" and the reason we say it's an epidemic is because it is in fact that. We don't have a solution today, we aren't looking to point fingers and place blame. But what we do want to do is ask for your attention and awareness around this issue. You have already given your time and attention but there are some other avenues we'd like for you to give some thought to. Nationally, roadway safety is a serious public health issue. In 2003, there were over 42,000 fatalities and almost 3 million injuries on our nation's roadways. We're here to let you know that three major agencies do consider these deaths and injuries to be one of our state's most serious public health problems.

We've talked about the emotional and human toll that these motor vehicle crashes take, and we cannot place a monetary value on a human life, yet we must acknowledge that they also take an economic toll. On a state level, fatal and injury crashes cost every person in Kansas more than \$1,015 every year. Last year, it totaled more than \$3 billion dollars. The share borne by taxpayers is staggering: national averages indicate that the public pays 12 % of the cost of crash injuries treated in an emergency department, 26% of the cost of injuries requiring hospitalization; and 48 % of the cost of injuries treated in a rehabilitation hospital. That's the public cost, not the individual's cost. Even the economic impact associated with not wearing a seatbelt is staggering. It's reported that, on average, hospital cost for unbuckled crash victims are 50% higher than for a belted victim. Society, not the victim involved, bears about 85% of these costs. As high as these costs may be, they fail to account for the pain and suffering caused by life-altering injuries and deaths.

KDOT is funding programs such as Click It or Ticket program and state-wide sobriety check points. KDHE leads Kansas SAFE Kids, Inc. We are doing many things but we still have an epidemic. The goal is a simple one, the solution is more complex.

Senator Palmer voiced concern with the high number of deer related accidents and suggested that Wildlife and Parks be included in the effort to seek ways to decrease the number of vehicle related deaths and injuries. She also mentioned alcohol being a factor and asked the presenters if there was a list of priorities of things that need to be worked on.

Secretary Miller said that 44% of the fatalities are alcohol related, so clearly as we go down the list of contributing factors it's a very large one. They have a lot of information and are trying to get a little smarter and more sophisticated in how to interpret and use it. They have started a project, working with Kansas State University, called a data mining activity, attempting to go into the data they already have and making better use of it and answering the kind of questions being asked. If we were going to start putting a range of where to start addressing the problem, how would we do that? All of these things are being looked at. They have people who's main focus is looking at traffic safety, both in Colonel Seck's department and in hers. They know a lot but the question is how can things be done better. Secretary Miller said that they are in the raising awareness and fact gathering stage and not yet to the making recommendations stage.

Secretary Bremby again stressed that 85% of the cost, of injuries associated with the folks not belted, are public costs. Secretary Miller introduced Wendall Meyer, Assistant Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration. His organization is very interested in lowering the national fatality rate and they are very helpful to the state.

Chairman Donovan asked if there were any federal funds available to help promote safety. Secretary Miller said the funds were usually given as an incentive for states to pass laws. For instance, when Kansas went down to a .8 law for drinking, it gave us the opportunity to receive some funds. She thinks there are incentive funds for having a primary seat belt law.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 a.m. Next meeting is scheduled for March 22, 2005.

SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE  
GUEST LIST

DATE: March 16, 2005

NAME	REPRESENTING
Ken Gulenkant	KDOT
Maggie Thompson	KDOT
Deb Miller	KDOT

**“STOP THE EPIDEMIC”**

*Motor vehicle death and injury are at epidemic levels and we need cures.*

Presented by

Col. William Seck, Superintendent, Kansas Highway Patrol

Deb Miller, Secretary, Kansas Department of Transportation

Roderick Bremby, Secretary, Kansas Department of Health and Environment

**Col. William Seck, Superintendent, Kansas Highway Patrol**

Four-hundred and fifty-six<sup>1</sup> men, women, and children were killed in motor vehicle crashes on Kansas roadways in 2004. In addition to those who died, some two thousand others suffered disabling injuries, and nearly twenty-three thousand more suffered non-incapacitating injuries.

Four-hundred and fifty-six people. That's more than the populations of the towns of Abbyville, Admire, Agenda, Agra, Albert, Alden, Alexander, Allen, Alta Vista, Alton, Arcadia, Assaira, Athol, Atlanta, Aurora, and Axtell. And that's only the As.

In Kansas, on average, more than one person is killed every day in motor vehicle-related crashes and every 21 minutes, someone is injured.<sup>2</sup>

As a Highway Patrol Superintendent, I am all too familiar with the toll these traffic deaths and injuries take on families and friends and being in those situations strengthens the resolve of every Kansas Highway Patrol officer to do what we can to prevent those incidents. To us, it's our routine daily activities that mean so much and go so far. To the public we serve, it may not seem as important until they become personally involved.

The writing of a speeding ticket may seem trivial to some but its purpose is to slow drivers down in hopes of preventing a crash. Likewise, the writing of a ticket for a seat belt violation. It's amazing how many times officers are asked, "Isn't there a murder that you could be preventing somewhere?" But the officer knows that writing the ticket is an important task. To our officers it is an effort to prevent a senseless death like the one last month where a mother of two small children died after the vehicle she was driving rolled over on top of her after she was thrown from the vehicle.

And then there is the impaired driver. Troopers have zero tolerance for impaired driving, and they make arrests in hopes that people will learn from the experience – ultimately changing behaviors.

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But if we hope to truly have a measurable impact – not only on impaired drivers, but also on all drivers who engage in dangerous behaviors – we need to find additional ways to intervene. I, along with my colleagues, Secretary Miller and Secretary Bremby plan to do exactly that.

**Deb Miller, Secretary, Kansas Department of Transportation**

More than 25,000 people were injured or killed last year...all in traffic accidents on Kansas streets, roads and highways.<sup>3</sup>

And all in spite of very aggressive KDOT maintenance and construction programs designed to make Kansas roads among the safest in the nation.

But the best roads in the world can't protect people from what caused 99 percent of those injuries and deaths. And what caused them was *driver error*.<sup>4</sup>

Our research reveals the many kinds of driver error that contribute to vehicle crashes and their resulting injuries. Things like ...

- Distraction and inattention
- Failing to yield
- Speeding
- Following too closely
- Using alcohol and drugs
- Not wearing a seat belt

The best roads in the world can't protect inattentive or impaired drivers. To make matters worse, the odds of these travelers surviving a crash diminish even more if they aren't wearing a seat belt. And we know that a third of them are not wearing a seat belt.

In fact, when we look at over-all use of seat belts, a survey of child seat-belt and car-seat use in Kansas last year found that while 81 percent of children younger than four were belted into car seats, only *half* of their siblings ages 5 to 14 were belted in properly.<sup>5</sup>

Statistics also show that 32 percent of all drivers and passengers aged 14 or older do not wear seat belts.<sup>6</sup> And on rural county roads, especially in western Kansas, nearly 50 percent of drivers don't wear seat belts.<sup>7</sup>

All of these situations are cause for concern. All of us presenting today are concerned for other reasons, too. Based on the most recently available statistics for Kansas...

- Vehicle crashes are the number one killer of Kansas children.<sup>8</sup>
- Thirty-seven percent of all crashes in Kansas occur in rural areas. Those crashes account for 75 percent of all crash fatalities statewide.<sup>9</sup>
- Seventy-six percent of all people killed in vehicle crashes in Kansas were not wearing a seatbelt.<sup>10</sup>

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- Kansas ranks 43rd in seatbelt use in the U.S.<sup>11</sup>  
(68% vs National 80%)

These are some of the statistics. But statistics tell only part of the story. We can't begin to quantify the feelings of the victims' families, friends, and loved ones.

It is for all of these reasons that lowering the national fatality rate is a top priority of the United States Department of Transportation. As a state, I believe we also need to make the reduction of highway fatalities a top priority. That is why I along with Secretary Bremby and Col. Seck of the Kansas Highway Patrol, have joined together to raise awareness of this issue and ultimately, to craft an action agenda to lower the fatality rate on our state roadways.



**Roderick Bremby, Secretary, Kansas Department of Health and Environment**

We've titled our presentation here today Stop the Epidemic. Motor Vehicle deaths and injuries are at epidemic levels and we need cures. We don't have a solution today and we are not here to point fingers at any person or groups of persons or to ask you for any legislation. We are here to ask for your attention and awareness.

Nationally, roadway safety is a serious public health issue. In 2003 there were 42,643 fatalities and almost 3 million injuries on our nation's roadways. Every 16 seconds of every hour of every day there is a traffic fatality or injury.

We're here to let you know that three major agencies *do* consider these deaths and injuries one of our state's most serious public health problems.

Because roadway fatalities happen one at a time, often times we don't realize the impact of the total number of lives lost. But the problem is every bit as serious as any threat of disease that would affect 25,000 people in Kansas every year.

In 2004, West Nile virus claimed a combined 540 lives in the *United States* – 456 people perished in automobile crashes in *Kansas*.<sup>12</sup>

We have recounted the human and emotional toll that motor vehicle crashes take. And while we cannot place a monetary value on a human life, we must acknowledge that they also take an economic toll.

On a state level, fatal and injury crashes cost every person in Kansas more than \$1,015 every year. Last year, it totaled more than \$3 billion dollars.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, the share borne by taxpayers is staggering: national averages indicate that the public pays 13 percent of the cost of crash injuries treated in an emergency department; 26 percent of the cost of injuries requiring hospitalization; and 48 percent of the cost of injuries treated in a rehabilitation hospital.<sup>14</sup>

According to the National Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, even the economic impact associated with not wearing a safety belt is staggering. They report that, on average, hospital costs for an unbuckled crash victim are 50 percent higher than those for a belted victim. Society bears about 85 percent of these costs, not the individual involved.<sup>15</sup> Those costs accrue via increased automobile insurance premiums; increased health and disability premiums; lost future earnings; legal and investigation costs; long-term and home care; home and vehicle modifications; aids and appliances; medical, ambulance, hospital and rehabilitation; property damage; family services and more. We



also have to consider employer productivity losses – costs that ripple through the economy as employers hire and train replacement workers.

High as these costs may be, they fail to account for the pain and suffering caused by life-altering injuries and death.

Rest assured. Those of us who are concerned for the health and safety of our citizens are not idly standing by while the death and disability statistics mount. There are efforts by the Highway Patrol to more strictly enforce existing traffic laws. KDOT is funding programs such as the new *Click It or Ticket* program and state-wide sobriety check points. KDHE leads Kansas SAFE Kids, Inc., a coalition of more than 60 statewide and regional organizations and businesses, dedicated to preventing unintentional injuries to Kansas children ages 0 to 14.

Still, there is much more that needs to be done.

We are all in a position to do something about this problem. And the time to be proactive has never been better, because the challenges facing us in the future are even more daunting:

- Certain groups, particularly older and younger drivers, are already over-represented in vehicle crashes, and those groups are expected to grow significantly.<sup>16</sup>
- Aggressive driving and speeding are becoming more common with increased travel and congestion.
- With yearly increases in travel and no improvement over our current safety performance, fatalities and injuries could increase by 50 percent by 2020.<sup>17</sup>

So, the *goal* is a simple one: to save lives; prevent injuries; reduce crashes. The *solution* is more complex.

KDHE, KDOT, and the Kansas Highway Patrol will be using our collective resources to bring attention to Kansas' roadway fatalities and injuries. We are holding community forums across Kansas in March and are stepping up our media efforts to raise awareness. We hope you will join us in this effort.

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<sup>1</sup> From KDOT Bureau of Traffic Safety. 456 is the count to date. Official number for 2004 to be released in June 05

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- <sup>2</sup> From KDOT Bureau of Traffic Safety. Actual number of fatalities, per Chief of KDOT Bureau of Traffic Safety Pete Bodyk, is 1.2 persons per day.
- <sup>3</sup> From KDOT 2003 Kansas Traffic Safety Statistics.  
[www.ksdot.org/burTransPlan/prodinfo/2003factsbook/Quick%20Facts.pdf](http://www.ksdot.org/burTransPlan/prodinfo/2003factsbook/Quick%20Facts.pdf)
- <sup>4</sup> KDOT Bureau of Traffic Safety. [www.ksdot.org/burTrafficSaf/teen/stats.asp](http://www.ksdot.org/burTrafficSaf/teen/stats.asp)
- <sup>5</sup> KDOT Kansas Safety Belt Education Office. The Pulse. Winter 2005. Reporting results from on-going  
Child Safety Seat Survey, 2002 -03 survey year and 2003-04 survey year.
- <sup>6</sup> KDOT. State of Kansas Highway Safety Plan, FFY 2005.
- <sup>7</sup> Annual Kansas Safety Belt Observational Survey.
- <sup>8</sup> KDHE. Table 56. Deaths from 39 Selected Causes by Age-Group and Sex of Decedent, Kansas, 2003.  
For children aged 1 – 21.
- <sup>9</sup> KDOT Bureau of Traffic Safety.
- <sup>10</sup> KDOT Bureau of Traffic Safety.
- <sup>11</sup> KDOT Bureau of Traffic Safety.
- <sup>12</sup> U.S. Center for Disease Control.
- <sup>13</sup> KDOT Bureau of Traffic Safety.
- <sup>14</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. *NHTSA 2020 Report*.  
<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/whatis/planning/2020Report/2020report.html>. Future Trends.
- <sup>15</sup> National Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.
- <sup>16</sup> National Center for Injury Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/cmprfact.htm> and  
*NHTSA 2020 Report*.
- <sup>17</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. *NHTSA 2020 Report*.

# Stop the Epidemic

*Motor vehicle death and injury are at epidemic levels and we need cures.*

## FACT SHEET

Consider this: Mad Cow Disease has killed about 300 people *worldwide* since 1990. Another much-publicized condition, West Nile Virus, claimed a combined 540 lives in the U.S. in 2002 and 2003.

Now consider this: Last year in Kansas alone, 456 people perished in vehicle crashes. An additional 2,000 suffered disabling injuries and some 23,000 suffered other injuries.

The Kansas Highway Patrol and the Departments of Transportation and Health and Environment are teaming up to raise awareness of this epidemic. Toward that end, we offer the following information:

- In 2004 in Kansas, on average, more than one person was killed each day, and one person was injured every 21 minutes in vehicle crashes.
- The overwhelming majority of traffic crashes are a result of driver error and are, thus, preventable.
- Traffic crashes are the number one killer of children in Kansas.
- Only half of Kansas children age 5-14 wear seat belts.
- 76 percent of all people killed in vehicle crashes in Kansas were not wearing seatbelts.
- Alcohol is a factor in 44 percent of all fatal crashes in Kansas.
- More than 21,000 people are arrested in Kansas every year for DUIs.
- Kansas ranks 43rd among the states in seatbelt use.
- Fatal and injury crashes cost every person in Kansas more than \$1,015 a year. Last year, the total cost exceeded \$3 billion.
- Kansas teens account for 7% of all registered drivers but 21% of all crashes.
- Drivers in rural areas, who are the least likely to wear seat belts, account for 37% of Kansas crashes, but 75% of crash fatalities.

Sources: Mad Cow and West Nile disease data provided by *U.S. Center for Disease Control*. All other statistics per KDOT Bureau of Traffic Safety.

**The Kansas Department of Transportation, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and the Kansas Highway Patrol have come together to raise awareness about the problem of fatalities and injuries on Kansas roadways.**

- To help raise awareness, four community forums will be held across the state. These forums will be a time for groups and individuals to come and speak about the impact of fatalities and injuries on our roadways. Representatives from KDOT, KDHE, and KHP will be there to listen and learn. The forums will be held:

**Colby, KS**

Tuesday, March 15, 2005

4:30 – 6:30 PM

City Limits Convention Center/  
Comfort Inn  
Chardon Room  
2225 South Range Ave.

**Wichita, KS**

Thursday, March 24, 2005

4:30 – 6:30 PM

Sedgwick County Extension Office  
Bison Room  
21st & Maize Road

**Pittsburg, KS**

Tuesday, March 22, 2005

4:30 – 6:30 PM

Memorial Auditorium & Convention  
Ctr.  
503 North Pine

**Lawrence, KS**

Wednesday, March 30, 2005

4:30 – 6:30 PM

Lawrence Visitor Information Center  
Union Pacific Depot - Community Room  
402 N. 2<sup>nd</sup> St.  
(Additional parking available to the  
south)

Any groups or individuals that are interested in participating in a community forum are invited to contact Maggie Thompson with the Kansas Department of Transportation at 785-296-5613 or [maggiet@ksdot.org](mailto:maggiet@ksdot.org).