

# KANSAS CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION



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## Testimony

By the Kansas Contractors Association

before the House Taxation Committee on Transportation Funding

February 16, 2012

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I am Bob Totten, Public Affairs Director for the Kansas Contractors Association. Our organization **represents over 400 companies** who are involved in the construction of highways and water treatment facilities in Kansas and the Midwest. Our organization has been in existence since 1923 and have been talking about roads and highways throughout the years.

Today, I want to thank you for allowing me to testify in regards to HB 2747...a bill that delays the implementation of the T works program. Our members have advised me to tell you we oppose this legislation.

Studies upon studies have shown that putting people to work through the construction industry is one of the fastest ways to get the economy going. K-State's Babcock report in the early 90's along with the Daicoff study from KU backed up other

nationwide reports that indicated when a million dollars is spent on highway construction, at least 42 to 47 jobs are created depending on the study you use as a basis for your information.

By having these people work, it sets in motion for that money to be spent in your communities...whether to pay taxes to your local units of government or to buy groceries and goods in your community. These jobs make the system work.

I remember talking to a former Representative from Harper years ago. He was not initially a highway supporter until the construction crews came to his town and built a new road. He said he could see the difference and his mind was changed following the summer they worked on the road in his community. He said during the time the crews were in town, they spent money at the Cream cup, stayed at the local motel and spent money on getting their equipment fixed at the local garage. That money flowed through his community that summer in the early 90's and that same thing happens with every road job that comes to a local community. Money is spent in the local community as the road is fixed or repaired and then when the crews leave, the citizens have a new road for the next 20-30 years....or even longer depending on the circumstances.

I may have relayed to some of you that the only construction job I have had was straight out of high school. I was a yard laborer or what I think was a gofer or flag person. That Summer of 69, many times I held a flag watching pavement dry, sometimes on a Saturday night when I thought I had better things to do. But let me tell you, I made

enough money that Summer to pay for my first year of college....and the same situation holds true today for people who work in the construction industry. They can make enough money to further their goals in life by working in construction.

I find it interesting that both political parties are saying jobs are their top priority ...but this proposed legislation is a jobs killer. Why would you want to reduce the amount of jobs in Kansas when it appears every one else is wanting to attract jobs to the state.

For that matter, I have equipment suppliers who bank on the farming community and the construction industry for their livelihood. If you freeze the planned spending in 2014 and 2015, the equipment suppliers are going to take a hit. I have not talked to the largest cat dealer in the state but I am sure the over 700 people they employ would suffer during such a downturn in spending by the state on highway construction.

I had the opportunity to travel around the state as part of the T link committee put together by Governor Sebelius. I listened to hundreds of people tell us what their community wanted and needed when it came to another and transportation program. Some were interested in public transit...others wanted to make sure medical emergencies could be taken care of with a stronger aviation program in the state...while others just told us they want additional passing lanes or shoulders so their roads would be safer.

The comments we received from that summer of hearings in 2008 was reiterated in resolutions from all 105 county commissions who passed resolutions supporting a new transportation program for Kansas. That was in 2008 and 2009. Has that position drastically changed? I doubt it. Your local constituents want and need a good

transportation program so as to travel around the state in a safe and efficient manner....

I can't imagine they want to stop the program now.

You as legislators know how important our roads are when you drive in every morning and are glad the roads are clear of snow and the roads are smooth. I heard that from one of your committee members the other day...He said I was in Missouri coming back from the airport and the Missouri roads were snow packed but once he got across the bridge to Kansas, the air clean and the roads were clear of snow. That wont be the case if you pass this freeze on the transportation program.

Thank you for your time today...and I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.