



Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 2136

House Taxation Committee Thursday, February 14, 2013

Mr. Chairman and House Taxation Committee Members:

My name is Jennifer Bruning, and I am Vice President of Government Affairs with the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce. I am submitting testimony today in opposition to House Bill 2136, which would redirect from the state highway fund to the state general fund the 4/10 of a cent sales tax that was passed in 2010 by the Legislature to fund T-Works, Kansas' 10-year comprehensive transportation plan.

The Overland Park Chamber has been a proud supporter of the T-Works program from its inception. Our business members supported passage of the one-cent sales tax increase in 2010 in part because it provided a **dedicated** source of revenue for T-Works projects. We were dismayed to see this bill introduced because we understand that its passage would decimate all T-Works projects to be "let" after 2014, including the Gateway Project in Johnson County at the intersection of I-435/1-35/K-10 highways and the U.S. 69 expansion project.

A high quality transportation system is of utmost importance to the Overland Park business community. Well-maintained roads are central to the infrastructure that enhances our quality of life and a comprehensive transportation plan provides jobs for our citizens. Kansas' transportation systems are the foundation for the efficient movement of people and goods. The maintenance and expansion of our system is crucial for economic development, business retention and expansion, and job creation throughout the entire state.

The OP Chamber commends Governor Brownback for his public commitment to the completion of the T-Works program and we urge the Legislature to do the same. On Tuesday, Governor Brownback and Transportation Secretary King were in Overland Park to announce several T-Works preliminary engineering projects in northeast Kansas, including the design work for Highway 69 from Indian Creek Parkway to 103rd St. In making the announcements, the Governor said, "Kansas businesses won't remain competitive in the future if we don't have a highway system that allows for efficiency and growth."

We wholeheartedly agree. Overland Park's business community is rapidly growing – in 2012 our City/Chamber economic development partnership announced over 4,000 new jobs to be created in our city boundaries. The T-WORKS program is allowing communities such as

Overland Park, which has a large number of engineering and construction companies, to capture these emerging economic opportunities. If HB 2136 passes, opportunities such as the expansion of Hwy 69 that were announced by the Governor and Secretary King earlier this week will be in jeopardy.

HB 2136 is evidence that several members of the Legislature would like to continue to use KDOT as a funding source to fill budget holes. Unfortunately, without continued investment to maintain and modernize our highways, the progress we have made over the last twenty-three years will be lost. While Secretary of Transportation King has been successful this year in utilizing low construction costs and interest rates to find “savings” within his department to send to other state programs without impacting the T-Works program, he has said that successful completion of the program would no longer be possible if the 4/10 sales tax is diverted to the State General Fund. The OP Chamber remains committed to our opposition to any transfers or diversions from the State Highway Fund.

We ask you as policymakers to honor your commitment to the T-Works funding structure as it was originally proposed and oppose HB 2136. Thank you for your consideration.