

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**REGARDING SENATE BILL 2157
RELATING TO A PRIMARY SEAT BELT LAW**

February 10, 2015

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) is providing written testimony in support of House Bill 2157, which increases fines for violation of the primary seat belt law.. This proposed legislation takes the current fine from \$10 (with no court costs) to \$60 (with no court costs).

Simply put, seat belts save lives and prevent injuries. Of the 348 traffic fatalities in the state in 2013, fifty-five percent, involved unbelted occupants. That equates to 146 persons whose lives may have been saved had they been wearing seat belts as required by K.S.A. 8-2503. When seat belts are worn, the risk of injuries to vehicle occupants is reduced by approximately 50 percent. According to KDOT's annual federally-required observational seat belt survey, "If the driver is belted, 95 percent of the other occupants are also belted."¹ Adversely, if the driver is not belted, about 30 percent of the other passengers are not belted.

A priority for Transportation Secretary Mike King – and which is at the core of everything KDOT does – is safety. There are many things KDOT does to design safety into our roadways. However, many of these safety features are of little benefit if we don't also promote safe driving behaviors and responsibility. Secretary King has a goal of reducing traffic fatalities in Kansas, and is a vocal advocate of increasing seat belt usage as one means of achieving that goal. The proposed bill will generate funds to support programs in the state designed to increase seat belt use and reduce the number of fatalities. One specific program is SAFE, Seatbelts Are For Everyone. The award winning program, started in southeast Kansas, has contributed to the reduction in teen fatalities. SAFE is a cooperative effort between schools, law enforcement, students and communities to increase teen seat belt use through peer to peer education, incentives and enforcement. Since the inception of SAFE in 2009, the observed teen seat belt rate in the state has risen from 61 to 83 percent.

The bill also creates the seat belt safety fund designed to promote occupant protection in the state. As part of KDOT's goal to reducing fatalities on Kansas roadways, KDOT administer this new fund in connection with its other safety programs.

¹ <http://www.ktsro.org/files/Seatbelts-Adult-Supplementary-Analysis,-2014.pdf>.