



TESTIMONY BEFORE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

REGARDING SENATE BILL 72
RELATED TO ALLOWING BUSES TO DRIVE ON SHOULDERS

March 7, 2015

Chairman Richard Proehl and Committee Members:

Good Afternoon, my name is Alice M. Amrein, Transit Administrator for Johnson County Government in Olathe, Kansas. I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 72 which would amend K.S.A. 2014 Supp. 75-5091 to allow transit buses to operate on certain shoulders in Johnson and Wyandotte counties. The existing legislation, passed as House Bill 2561 in FY 2010, allows this operation only in Johnson County. Bus on Shoulder increases the capacity of the interstate without a major reconstruction project that would be cost-prohibitive. Allowing buses to operate on shoulders in Wyandotte County, the most congested portion of I-35, will further extend this benefit.

Purpose: Johnson County Transit is requesting this legislative amendment in order to extend The **JO Xpress** I-35 Bus on Shoulder program to the approximately four-mile segment of I-35 in Wyandotte County. This amendment is supported by the Unified Government and the Kansas Department of Transportation. These partnerships have been critical to the successful rollout of Bus on Shoulder operations, and the future expansion of this program.

Currently, JCT operates buses on the shoulders on an approximately eight-mile segment of I-35 in Johnson County, from 95th Street to Lamar, as allowed by House Bill 2561. The speed restrictions and other safety features established in the bill will remain in place. Transit buses are required to travel on the shoulder no more than 10 miles per hour above the rate of traffic when the rate of traffic falls below 35 miles per hour. Bus drivers are required to yield to merging, entering, and exiting traffic on the highway. These guidelines, along with driver training initiatives, have allowed JCT to safely operate on the shoulders for more than three years.

Improvements to the shoulders of I-35 in Wyandotte County, which will consist of guardrail relocations, drainage inlet repairs, and signage installation, have already been designed and grant funding has been set aside to fully cover these costs.

JCT's Record of Bus on Shoulders Operations: Enhanced express bus service in the I-35 Corridor provides improved service reliability and customer satisfaction. JCT has received mostly positive feedback from drivers and transit passengers since implementation. In the first three years of operation, there has only been one (non-injury) incident involving buses using the shoulder. The shoulders of I-35 get significant usage by **The JO Xpress** buses, with an estimated 3,800 miles travelled on the shoulder in FY 2014, a 34 percent increase from the previous year. JCT has found Bus on Shoulder to be a valuable tool for improving the passenger experience and quality of service on **The JO**.

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Benefits of Senate Bill 72: By allowing the extension of JCT's Bus on Shoulder program, I-35 will be able to carry more commuters without a major highway reconstruction. The reliability of JCT's transit service will be further improved by being able to utilize shoulders on the most congested portion of the highway. These benefits will make transit more attractive to Johnson County commuters and will have a significant effect on how Johnson Countians view transit service.

Finally, I would like to thank you for considering this action, on behalf of the users of the I-35 Corridor that will benefit from this legislation and the extension of bus on shoulder service. The Board of County Commissioner has endorsed this transit operating concept and has made this legislation one of their top priorities.

Respectfully submitted,

Alice M. Amrein

Alice M. Amrein, CCTM
Transit Administrator