

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Tuesday, March 15, 2016

HOUSE BILL 2605

Testimony of Thomas G. Franzen, CTP, CPFO
Johnson County Treasurer & Finance Director

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of Johnson County and the Kansas County Treasurers Association as a member of the Legislative Committee on HB 2605.

While we support the KTA collection efforts, we strongly oppose the requirement that the County Treasurer serve as the default collection method by rejecting vehicle registrations or renewals if the owner of such vehicle has unpaid tolls.

The passage of HB 2605 would add complexity to the current vehicle registration process and increase wait times for customers. It will escalate customer frustration and security concerns for County Treasurers and their staff. County Treasurers' statutory duty is the collection of property taxes. This bill supersedes and contradicts that statutory duty, thereby hindering those efforts. The passage of this bill puts County Treasurers in the position of collecting unpaid tolls from other states in place of collecting property taxes for the State of Kansas and local taxing authorities. For example, a Kansas taxpayer may have a toll violation in a state outside of Kansas that is included in the multi-state agreement. County Treasurers may be delayed in collecting and distributing property taxes to all taxing jurisdictions, including the State of Kansas.

Additionally, the process of verifying and matching customer records and vehicle plates cannot be relied upon for the successful implementation of the intent of this bill. The state motor vehicle system contains multiple customer records for the same person. For example Joe may exist as Joe, Joseph, or Joseph Michael making it difficult or unlikely we can identify the correct customer.

Currently, plate combinations are not unique in the State of Kansas and many other states. County Treasurers and KDOR staff spend time researching ownership records for out-of-state tolling authorities that have implemented plate readers. We have an example in Johnson County where we received a notification for an unpaid toll on a county vehicle because the plate number was flagged by another state. The plate number was the same plate number that was on a vehicle owned by a private passenger vehicle owner in the State of Kansas. This results in the incorrect vehicle owner being billed for tolls.

I believe the passage of this bill will set a bad precedent and open the door to County Treasurers collecting other types of unpaid bills. An example of this is the introduction of HB 2727 which prohibits registration or renewal of certain vehicles and boats by a person owing money under a child support order, outstanding warrant and/or subpoena.

For the stated reasons, and others not yet identified, this bill appears to be misguided policy.

I respectfully request that you consider the detrimental impacts of HB 2605 on County Treasurer operations and local government and not pass this bill out of committee. Thank you for your consideration.