

Date: February 2, 2017

To: House Committee on Transportation

From: Larry R. Baer  
General Counsel

Re: HB 2095  
Neutral Testimony – With Concerns

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill 2095 on behalf of the League of Kansas Municipalities and our member cities.

HB 2095 would permit the loading on certain truck-tractor semitrailer vehicles to be increased from 85,500 pounds to 90,000 pounds. The bill does require that such vehicles transport the loads on six or more axles. These vehicles could not be operated on interstate system roads.

The League understands and acknowledges the position of the agricultural and trucking industries seeking to increase load capacities of trucks. The League has long stood for the growth of the economy and recognizes that agriculture plays a large part in the economy of Kansas. In addition, roads, bridges, and other transportation infrastructure are critical to state and local development activities. Thus, while we support the access to economic opportunity that is being proposed by reason of the increase in vehicle weights under HB 2095, we also have concerns regarding the impact that heavier trucks will have upon the streets, roads, and bridges in Kansas cities.

The requirement that there be additional axles before the increase weight permits are issued is a logical approach to handling the additional weight. This requirement, as we understand it, should significantly lessen the impact upon streets; however, bridges would continue to be significant concern because they need to be inspected and load rated for the heavier weight to assure safety. It is our understanding that the heavier weights will have the greatest effect on bridges with long spans or long structures. Others have, or will, discuss the cost of inspections and load rating. This is not an inexpensive undertaking. We have been given estimates of \$2,000 - \$3,000 on the low end and upwards of \$20,000 or more for the larger bridges.

We do understand that the Kansas Department of Transportation is partnering with the U.S. Department of Transportation on a statewide bridge inspection program and that the project can be expanded to include the new 90,000 pound weight ratings and could also address local bridges. We also understand the KDOT is having to do the project in phases because of challenges in funding the state's 20% match. Thus, according to KDOT, it may take eight years or more for the program to be completed.

Without an expedited KDOT plan to review and rate bridges, cities would be left with the following choices:

- Wait and see how, or if, KDOT prioritizes the bridge inspections and load ratings. This would require strict enforcement of current load rating limits. This option also has the inherent risk that state funds may continue to be delayed.
- Proceed with self-inspection and load rating and incurring the cost at the local level. This could be considered an unfunded mandate.
- Closing bridges with unknown or suspect load limits. This may lead to detours or other unintended consequences.

As stated above, the League has concerns about the protection and wellbeing of our cities' critical infrastructure, their street, roads, and bridges. We ask that you give these matters serious consideration when debating and deliberating HB 2095.