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TESTIMONY

(Oral – Proponent)

Date: March 15, 2018
Before: House Transportation Committee
By: Jerry Younger, P.E., Managing Director, KAPA-KRMCA
Re: HB 2775

Chairman Proehl and Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Kansas Aggregate Producers' Association and the Kansas Ready Mixed Concrete Association (KAPA-KRMCA) in support of House Bill 2775. KAPA-KRMCA represents over 175-member companies that directly produce or support the production of rock, sand, gravel and ready mix concrete products. For every road, bridge, house or building constructed in Kansas, KAPA-KRMCA members likely provided some of the materials to build it.

Whatever part of the of state you might call home or travel to, you can't deny the fact that our transportation infrastructure constitutes much of the thread that weaves the economic and social fabric of life in Kansas. The high importance Kansans place on strengthening that fabric has been evidenced by the passage of three separate ten-year transportation programs since 1989. Unfortunately, the past couple of years have generated great concern and frustration with the state of transportation funding and resulting lack of necessary, and promised, transportation investments.

Think about your recent trips driving on Kansas highways. For even the most casual observer, it's likely you saw many of the following things:

- While the majority of the system may satisfy the technical criteria for a "good" condition rating, doesn't there appear to more signs of distresses on the road surface (i.e. "chinks in the armor") than you can remember seeing in recent years? My professional career has taught me that when KDOT is unable to fully fund their best practice of "doing the right action at the right time", those chinks in the armor will increase. Research, past history and my own past experience shows, time and again, that even the smallest chinks, not addressed in a timely fashion, will always grow quickly into a much bigger and more expensive problem.

- The 23 locations where regional groups had come together and identified a priority need for a transportation improvement, been promised that improvement would be under construction by 2020 but yet still wait, indefinitely, for it to happen.
- Evidence of newly developing local road and bridge needs going unaddressed while history has many examples of a financially healthy KDOT being able to step in and provide a level of participation to get a local funding package assembled and projects underway.
- Emergence of additional project needs to address congestion and safety issues.
- Opportunities for transportation improvements that would foster and support long term economic growth within all the regions of Kansas. There is little dispute that those things are good investments of transportation dollars, unfortunately, those things just get added to the ever-growing list of “need to do it but no money available”.

Not surprisingly, those things we all see driving around Kansas, are the same things we heard from the over 300 stakeholders that participated in a series of bus tours and town hall events across the state in 2017.

We must begin a discussion that can lead to a better future meeting the expectations we’ve heard from Kansans including: 1) Regional transportation improvements already promised will be built, 2) Whatever funding stream is created to meet transportation needs must go only for that purpose, and, 3) smart decisions on transportation investments that best support the economic opportunity and safety of themselves and their families.

I would add that House Bill 2775 does lay out a specific structure and process to the task force and the efforts they will undertake - one which looks much different than previous transportation task forces. Certainly, some degree of difference is necessary because the world of 2018 is not the same as it was in 2008 nor as it was in 1998 when the two previous task forces were created. But, having been engaged with the **successful** outcomes of those previous two transportation task forces, I do believe those successes warrant some consideration of imitating as much of the previous process and structure as practically possible.

Past history in Kansas has shown that there are huge benefits to the state when transportation funding has higher degree of certainty and reliability. I know KAPA-KRMCA member companies are more likely to increase their employment and capital purchases if there is trust that annual transportation funding levels will stay at a consistently increased number. It’s been well-documented that dollars associated with those increases “turnover” multiple times in the local and regional economy.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. We ask that the committee endorse the conceptual intent of House Bill 2775 which creates a transportation task force.