



Finney County Economic Development Corporation

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
in support of HB2775
LONA DUVALL, PRESIDENT/ CEO
FINNEY COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
March 14, 2018**

Chairman Proehl and Members of the House Transportation Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in support of HB2775 on behalf of Finney County Economic Development Corporation in regard to our transportation infrastructure needs.

Over the past several years, many transportation projects in our region have been delayed and/or cancelled. All infrastructure in Kansas is important, but transportation in our region is of elevated importance. While we have experienced much diversity in our economic growth in recent years, our economy is still largely based on agriculture. The ability to get our crops, livestock, and manufactured products to the global market is imperative.

We were fortunate to be selected as one of two communities for investment into Transload Facilities from the Kansas Department of Transportation. That investment allowed us to expand an existing private business in our community and add more than 300 additional acres of land to our Transloading and Industrial Complex. And, after years of cooperation with BNSF, we are now in a position to expand our transloading services to include container services which will allow us to eventually reach intermodal status. This will allow us to expand many of our existing businesses and will also open the door for our recruitment of additional manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution companies to Kansas. However, all of this requires investment into our transportation network.

In Finney County, we have long been progressive and forward-thinking. We have continuously striven to invest in our community's infrastructure in order to grow our economy and improve the quality of life for our residents. In the past two years, we have attracted private investment of more than \$400 million and have seen more than 2,300 jobs created — all while experiencing less than 3% unemployment. In order to continue to grow our economy, we must recruit new residents to our community to fill positions. Because of our geographic location and our heavily agricultural economy, our residents rely heavily upon quality roadways in order to drive for work and recreation. The lack of maintenance and improvements to our highway

networks creates safety issues and hampers our opportunity to attract new businesses and residents.

Economic development happens at the local level and Kansas' GDP is directly impacted by the economic activity that takes place in southwest Kansas. There is a very real difference between "spending" and "investing". Money that is invested provides for a return on those monies. We understand this very well as the \$635,000 of public money invested in economic development in Finney County over the past two years has allowed us to leverage more than \$400 million in private investment — a return on investment of \$639 for each \$1 invested.

It is time for Kansas to reinvest in herself and create additional opportunities for economic growth. Our communities in southwest Kansas have many avenues in which to grow, but we must have the State's support for our basic infrastructure requirements, including transportation. While many needs exist throughout the state of Kansas, we would respectfully ask that you keep the needs of the southwest Kansas region at the top of mind when looking for investment opportunities in transportation. Our economy is reliant upon adequate access and our ability to attract new industries and residents is directly impacted by the quality of our transportation systems. A task force to address our transportation needs and future statewide transportation plans is needed and we would encourage you to ensure that all regions in Kansas are well represented on that task force.

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