



Testimony of the Kansas Association of Counties to the
Senate Committee on Taxation
Proponent for SB 224 • March 17, 2017

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 224, a policy change to address infrastructure in Kansas. In 2016, our member counties took a stance to support transportation and infrastructure during the 2017 session. Our members were well aware of the budget challenges in Kansas, but we knew it was important to remain vocal on maintaining infrastructure. SB 224 helps address this need by increasing the tax on motor-vehicle fuels, LP-gas, E85 fuels, and compressed natural gas. SB 224 also changes the fee schedule for fuel permits.

KAC works to keep a narrow focus on the legislative issues that directly affect counties. But in recent years, the sweeps from KDOT into the general fund have hindered state maintenance on infrastructure and passed more responsibilities to the local level. SB 224 may not change this course in 2017 or 2018, but our counties voiced their insistence that we return to consistent maintenance of our roads and bridges. Our hope is that SB 224 helps accomplish this goal.

KAC has two standing principles directly relating to transportation: (1) support planning and adequate funding for the state's transportation system and infrastructure needs; and (2) support safe and reliable infrastructure while opposing legislation that speeds the decline of our roads and bridges.¹ While some metrics rate Kansas roads as sound and stable,² the focus of these studies do not give a complete picture of our rural roads and bridges. Another report similarly based on 2014 data showed a grim picture on the roads less commonly traveled in Kansas.³ The report from TRIP ("The Road Information Program")—a nonprofit that researches and evaluates data on surface-transportation issues⁴—rated 30% of our rural roads in poor condition.

¹ Kansas Association of Counties 2017 Policy Statement. Available at: www.kansascounties.org/DocumentCenter/View/2316.

² David T. Hartgen, Ph.D., P.E. and M. Gregory Fields, Ph.D. 22nd Annual Highway Report: The Performance of State Highway Systems. REASON FOUNDATION (2016) (citing 2013-14 data from the Federal Highway Administration). Available at: http://reason.org/files/22nd_annual_highway_report.pdf.

³ Kansas' Rural Roads Have High Rates of Deficiencies and High Fatality Rates. TRIP (2015). Available at: www.tripnet.org/docs/Rural_Roads_TRIP_KS_Release_05-19-15.pdf.

⁴ About Trip (2017). Available at: www.tripnet.org/about.php.

A road in poor condition means:

Drivers on roads rated as poor are likely to notice that they are driving on a rougher surface, which puts more stress on their vehicles. Roads rated as poor may have cracked or broken pavements. These roads often show significant signs of pavement wear and deterioration and may also have significant distress in their underlying foundation. Road or highway surfaces rated poor provide an unacceptable ride quality and are in need of resurfacing and some need to be reconstructed to correct problems in the underlying structure.⁵

KAC and our member counties want a commitment to devote adequate dollars to building and preserving our State's infrastructure. SB 224 moves us closer to this pursuit. Admittedly, direct transportation funding may not happen immediately with more sweeps expected, but we need state policies that provide an opportunity to maintain our infrastructure.

Respectfully,



Nathan Eberline
Kansas Association of Counties

⁵ *Bumpy Roads Ahead: America's Roughest Rides and Strategies to make our Roads Smoother*. TRIP (Nov. 2016). Available at: www.tripnet.org/docs/Urban_Roads_TRIP_Report_November_2016.pdf.