

MINUTES

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON A NEW COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

December 18, 2008

Crimson and Gold Ballroom—Jack H. Overman Student Center
Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, Kansas

Members Present

Senator Dwayne Umbarger, Chairperson
Senator Karin Brownlee
Senator Derek Schmidt
Senator John Vratil
Representative Mike Burgess
Representative Terrie Huntington
Representative Julie Menghini
Representative Don Myers
Representative Jene Vickrey

Staff Present

Jill Shelley, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Corey Carnahan, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Bruce Kinzie, Office of the Revisor of Statutes
Mike Corrigan, Office of the Revisor of Statutes
Mary Jane Brueck, Committee Secretary

Conferees

Steve Beykirch, Chairperson of the Board of Officials for the Chamber of Commerce
Russell King, Chairperson of the Board of Southeast Kansas Inc. (SEK Inc.)
Dean Mann, Chairperson of the SEK Inc. Transportation Council
Jim Zaleski, FCDME (Fellowship Certified Destination Management Executive),
Director of Tourism, Parsons and Greater Labette County
Dale Bunn, Director of Economic Development for the City of Fort Scott
Cynthia McFarlin spoke on behalf of Vicki Pritchett, President/CEO Fort Scott Area
Chamber of Commerce
Gary Palmer, Treasurer of the Fort Scott Young Professionals League
Clayton Tatro, President of Fort Scott Community College
Ken Brock, CEO, Names and Numbers
Lois Carlson, Erie, Kansas
James M. AuBuchon, Executive Director, US-69 Highway Association of Kansas
Dr. Howard Smith, Assistant to the President/Legislative Liaison for Pittsburg State

University

Jeff Morris, Coffeyville City Administrator
J.D. Cox, City Administrator of Neodesha
Karen Porter, Executive Director, Neodesha Chamber of Commerce
Representative Doug Gatewood
Pat Cedenno, Vice President of Growth Initiatives for Watco Transportation
Kris Marple, Wilson County Administrator
Jim Dahmen represented Columbus, Kansas
Pam Henderson, Mayor of Pittsburg, Kansas
Bill Beasley, Public Works Director for the City of Pittsburg
Ann Charles, Great Plains Development Authority, Parsons
Fred Gress, Parsons City Manager
Tim Schook, City Administrator for the City of Arma
Chris Kelly, Director of Marketing, Mt. Carmel Regional Medical Center
Geoffrey Hines, Pittsburg Area Young Professionals
Penny Evans, County Engineer for Miami County
Mike Hershey, Cessna Aircraft Company
Paul Sasse, Independence City Manager
Ralph McGeorge, Crawford County Commissioner
Steve Lohr, Executive Director, SEK-CAP
Representative Bob Grant

Morning Session

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Dwayne Umbarger shortly after 10:00 a.m.

Chairperson Umbarger made several opening remarks before hearing conferees. He introduced Representative Julie Menghini, who extended thanks to Pittsburg State University for hosting the Committee, to the Alumni Center for hosting lunch and providing beverages, and to the Watco Company for providing lunch in the Alumni Center for the staff and the legislators on the Committee. She extended the lunch invitation to the guest legislators as well.

Chairperson Umbarger introduced guest legislators attending the meeting: Representative Bob Grant, Representative Shirley Palmer, Representative Doug Gatewood, Senator Jim Barone, and Senator-elect Bob Marshall. Chairperson Umbarger yielded the chair to Senator Derek Schmidt.

Senator Schmidt called on Steve Beykirch, Chairperson of the Board of the Pittsburg Chamber of Commerce, who spoke about the safety and economic disadvantages of not having four-lane highways in the area ([Attachment 1](#)).

Chairperson Umbarger introduced Russell King, Chairperson of the Board of Southeast Kansas Inc. He explained the organization and its purpose. Dean Mann, Chairperson of the Transportation Council of Southeast Kansas Inc., addressed the organization's priorities for highway, rail, and air transportation ([Attachment 2](#)).

Jim Zaleski, Director of Tourism, Parsons and Greater Labette County, spoke on behalf of the US-400 Corridor Association on the benefits of four lanes for that highway ([Attachment 3](#)).

Dale Bunn, Director of Economic Development for the City of Fort Scott, began that city's presentation. He spoke about the need for US-69 four-lane improvements from Fort Scott to I-44,

Fort Scott area priority transportation needs, and the Fort Scott 23rd St./BNSF grade separation overpass for public safety, economic development and US-69 traffic flow. Nick Graham, Fort Scott City Commissioner, spoke of the need of the overpass for safety as well as traffic flow (Attachment 4).

Cynthia McFarlin spoke on behalf of Vicki Pritchett, President/CEO Fort Scott Area Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber asks for the Committee to consider the inclusion of improvements to the US-69 corridor in any future comprehensive transportation plans (Attachment 5).

Gary Palmer, Treasurer of the Fort Scott Young Professionals League, spoke in favor the completion of the four-lane expansion of the US-69 Highway Corridor (Attachment 6).

Clayton Tatro, President of Fort Scott Community College (FSCC), told the Committee one of the things that makes the college unique is that its facilities extend from Kansas City to Pittsburg. It has a partnership with Kansas City Kansas Community College; the truck driving school at Pittsburg State University; five programs in process across the county; and additional facilities in Paola. He said that 45 percent of credit hours are in occupational education, including these two programs: FSCC has an exclusive Harley Davidson program in the nation located in the Frontenac area, and it is one of only 17 programs in the nation that is partnered with John Deere and its technical program. He spoke in support of improvement to US-69 to improve recruitment and population growth in the Fort Scott area.

Ken Brock, CEO, Names and Numbers, spoke about airports and the importance of the first impressions they offer to companies that are considering doing business in the area. Good airports are essential for economic competition, he said (Attachment 7).

Lois Carlson, Erie, spoke about the corridor of K-47, in particular that portion that runs from Altoona to the US-59 junction south of Erie. She said this is a dangerous strip of highway and asked that the road be widened to make it safer.

James M. AuBuchon, Executive Director, US-69 Highway Association of Kansas, spoke to the Committee about the need for Highway 69 to be maintained; for it to be completed as a four-lane highway from Fort Scott to I-44; and for a plan for future needs as businesses and population grow (Attachment 8).

Dr. Howard Smith, Assistant to the President/Legislative Liaison for Pittsburg State University, explained how improvement to US-69 will help increase enrollment at the University and improve the local economy (Attachment 9).

Jeff Morris, Coffeyville City Administrator, said the City of Coffeyville has several priorities: completion of the system enhancement project already planned for US-169; a railroad crossing grade separation at US-169 and South Walnut to eliminate traffic blocked 20 to 30 times a day for periods of up to 15 minutes each time; continued funding for local projects; funding for airport improvements for economic development; and avenues for financing other than fuel tax (Coffeyville would prefer a sales tax) (Attachment 10).

J.D. Cox, City Administrator of Neodesha, and Karen Porter, Executive Director, Neodesha Chamber of Commerce, gave a presentation addressing that city's needs. They said the city is willing to work with the state on funding to meet those needs. They listed these local needs: grade separation on Main Street/ US-75; geometric improvements to the US-400/Granby St. intersection; geometric improvements to the US-75/Ottawa Road intersection (Wilson Medical Center); widening of US-400 to a separated four-lane; widening of US-75 to a separated four-lane; policy change

allowing signage other than “Neodesha via County Road” on main highways; and a policy change allowing non-county seat communities visibility on state signage ([Attachment 11](#)).

Chairperson Umbarger said the Committee would break for lunch until 1:30 p.m.

Afternoon Session

Chairperson Umbarger reconvened the meeting at 1:35 p.m.

Representative Doug Gatewood, 1st District, asked the Committee to consider completion of K-7, a narrow road with no shoulder, from Cherokee to Columbus ([Attachment 12](#)).

The next speaker was Pat Cedeno, Vice President of Growth Initiatives for Watco Transportation Services, which operates 19 railroads in 16 states. He requested increasing the state funding available for grants and loans to railroads from \$3 million to \$5 million a year. He further requested allowing that funds be available to railroad customers for sidings, to communities for rail yard improvements, to customers relocating to less congested areas, and to owners of industrial parks for rail improvements as well as to railroad companies ([Attachment 13](#)).

Kris Marple, Wilson County Administrator, read a resolution endorsing specific transportation improvements ([Attachment 14](#)).

Jim Dahmen, Columbus, said he “pleaded” with the Committee to complete the US-69/US-400 corridor for the safety of residents of Cherokee County ([Attachment 15](#)).

Chairperson Umbarger introduced Pam Henderson, Mayor of Pittsburg. She said that Pittsburg would like to see completion of the four-lane link to I-44 in Oklahoma as well as upgrading of US-400 to a four-lane highway from El Dorado to US-69 ([Attachment 16](#)).

Bill Beasley, Public Works Director for the City of Pittsburg, spoke about KLINK funds. He said that an assessment and inventory made in 2007 by the Public Works Department showed the need for an additional \$2 million or \$500,000 a year for the next ten years to bring Pittsburg streets to an acceptable level. He requested continuation of funding programs that assist rural communities in extending operating budgets and help maintain the transportation system in Kansas ([Attachment 17](#)).

Ann Charles, Great Plains Development Authority, Parsons, told the Committee that it is time to take Highway-400 to the next level as the four-lane corridor it was designed to be. She said that a four-lane US-400 is critical to the overall economic development of southeast Kansas and particularly to the redevelopment of the Great Plains Industrial Park, the 14,000-acre site of the former Kansas Army Ammunition Plant ([Attachment 18](#)).

Fred Gress, Parsons City Manager, represented the Mayor, City Commissioners, and the Citizens of Parsons. He said that US-400 should be expanded from I-44 through Southeast Kansas to Wichita and beyond to help the economic development of the area ([Attachment 19](#)).

Tim Schook, City Administer for the City of Arma, said transportation is a key component for any city to have the opportunity to grow and prosper. With US-69 completed between Kansas City and I-44, the potential for economic growth in all of southeast Kansas is increased exponentially. Arma also supports the expansion of US-400 (Attachment 20).

Chris Kelly, Director of Marketing, spoke for Jonathan Davis, President/CEO of Mt. Carmel Regional Medical Center, located in Pittsburg. He said that the completion of US-69 will increase support to current businesses as well as enhance recruitment of new businesses; that in turn will support the continued growth of the medical center. He added that the completed highway would improve access to airports and larger metropolitan areas, which is critical to attract and retain talented professionals. He said the people of the area rely on a good infrastructure to provide good transportation to providers of routine medical care and meet transportation needs in emergencies (Attachment 21).

Geoffrey Hines represented Pittsburg Area Young Professionals. That organization's mission is to attract and retain young professionals in the Pittsburg area. He said it is vital that a new comprehensive transportation package be planned and properly funded and include completion of US-60, a critically important transportation route in southeast Kansas (Attachment 22).

Penny Evans, County Engineer for Miami County, presented the need for completion of work on both US-69 and US-169 and discussed additional transportation needs in Miami County (Attachment 23).

Mike Hershey spoke on behalf of Cessna Aircraft Company and made the following points:

- Its assembly line near Independence produces jets. This plant has a lot of work, providing jobs. Employment will increase as the plant expands production;
- Cessna has concern about the highways employees must use to get to work; many come from areas that are an hour or an hour and a half away from the factory;
- Company officials would like to see four-lane access across to US-400, but especially four-lane improvement to Highway 75 to the Oklahoma border; and
- Airports also are important to Cessna's business. Local airport needs include improved instrument landing systems, additional navigation aids, improvement to the terminal building to take it out of the 1960s look, and access to a partner in maintaining the planes.

Paul Sasse, Independence City Manager, spoke in favor of improvements to US-75. He said it was studied as part of the 1999 plan, traffic has increased since that time, and a need exists to make it four lanes. Independence leaders would like a study to find the best way for traffic to go through the city. He also said the city needs maintenance of streets in the industrial park area (Attachment 24).

Ralph McGeorge, Crawford County Commissioner, spoke in favor of four lanes throughout the US-69 corridor; making US-400 four lanes from El Dorado to US-69; and an upgrade of K-47 to have a wider driving surface and shoulders to US-69. Mr. McGeorge said he thought all concerns and requests discussed at the meeting were important and would be beneficial to the entire area of southeast Kansas and important to economic development of the entire area (Attachment 25).

Steve Lohr, Executive Director SEK-CAP, a community action agency, said the agency's transit buses make numerous trips throughout the area transporting people to jobs, Head Start classes, medical appointments, and more, with more than 72,000 rides in the preceding 12 months. He encouraged the Committee to continue funding rural transit (Attachment 26).

Representative Bob Grant said southeast Kansas needs the completion of US-69, US-169, and US-75 in order to get people to come to the area. The economic growth of southeast Kansas is dependent on the US-69 corridor.

Chairperson Umbarger adjourned the meeting at 3:50 p.m. The next meeting will be January 8, 2009, in Topeka.

Prepared by Mary Jane Brueck
Edited by Jill Shelley

Approved by Committee on:

January 8, 2009

(Date)