



Johnson County Government Testimony in Support of the Kansas FORWARD Program February 17, 2020

As a key partner in the regionally coordinated, multi-jurisdictional RideKC public transportation system, Johnson County, Kansas has long recognized the importance of mobility in the lives of our residents. Access to jobs, education and healthcare are critical to our economy and success as a community, and as a member of the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), Johnson County supports the regional priority of an efficient, effective multimodal transportation program that will increase employer access to our workforce and attract, retain and enhance businesses to our metropolitan area.

Johnson County sincerely appreciates the effort made by the Kansas Department of Transportation in their local consultation process, which allows regional stakeholders in northeast Kansas and around the state to share their priorities regarding transportation investment in Kansas. The proposed Kansas FORWARD program, with its focus on preservation of the statewide transportation system, a commitment to multimodal investment and a new, rolling project prioritization process, is in alignment with the county's 2020 legislative platform goal of supporting the funding of a comprehensive transportation plan that includes highways, airports, trails and transit.

Johnson County is unique in the state for the economic impact that northeast Kansas has for the entirety of the state, from population growth, to state GDP, to employment growth – between 2016 and 2019, 84% of all new jobs in Kansas were created in Johnson County. At the same time, less than 10% of jobs in the region are accessible by public transportation, and as our population both grows and ages, transportation for older adults will continue to be a challenge.

In both access to employment and meeting the mobility needs of our older population, public transportation is a critical service in our regional prosperity. The state of Kansas ranks 29th in per capita transit spending in the U.S., and while the proposed funding for transit under the FORWARD program is sincerely appreciated, the challenge in meeting the demonstrable need for enhanced transit remains.

Johnson County joins the Mid-America Regional Council and the Kansas Public Transportation Association in encouraging the Kansas legislature to increase the funding level for public transportation in Kansas under the FORWARD program.

Thank you for your thoughtful attention to the transportation and mobility needs of Kansans. Johnson County supports the goals of the FORWARD program in providing committed and stable funding for multimodal transportation priorities in our region.