

PROPONENT TESTIMONY

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

SB 375

An Act concerning transportation; providing for the FORWARD transportation program

**Whitney Damron
City of Topeka**

February 18, 2020

Madam Chair McGinn and Members of the Committee:

The City of Topeka enthusiastically lends its supports to SB 375, the FORWARD Transportation Program that continues the State's commitment to transportation infrastructure with its fourth comprehensive transportation program in thirty years.

Kansas has some of the best highways, roads and transportation infrastructure in the country and our commitment to quality transportation infrastructure since enactment of the interstate highway system has served our citizens and those who travel through Kansas well. FORWARD Kansas will continue that commitment and this legislation is worthy of your favorable consideration.

For the City of Topeka, SB 375 offers us the possibility to partner with the State on our city's highest transportation priority: Reconstruction of the Polk-Quincy Viaduct in downtown Topeka.

I-70 curves through downtown Topeka and the Polk-Quincy viaduct is recognized as a dangerous bottleneck. For a number of years, the City has worked with KDOT on design for replacement of this critical piece of transportation infrastructure. We have reached out to our congressional delegation to solicit partial federal funding and continue to dialog with KDOT on design, timeline and funding issues. The governing body of the City of Topeka is committed to this project and will be a willing and substantial financial partner with the State when this project is greenlighted for construction.

Cost estimates for this project, even in phases is very expensive - \$175-235 million, depending upon staging and final design. The City is committed to doing its part and believe this project can be commenced during the term of the FORWARD Transportation Program.

We would like to call attention and give support to a critical piece of SB 375 and that is the allowance for the use of Alternative Delivery in the bill. This bidding process requires designers and contractors to work together to share project design options and bring projects into use faster and more efficiently through the collaboration of all professionals involved – engineers, architects, contractors, KDOT, local transportation professionals and more. Alternative Delivery can save millions of dollars on major construction projects and shorten construction dramatically.

KDOT estimates Alternative Delivery would reduce the Polk-Quincy project from 3 years to only 2 years, which would save an estimated 30,000 travel hours, reduce the price tag by millions of dollars and dramatically reduce unpopular traveler detours. There is simply no ignoring the benefits of Alternative Delivery for the State, local governments and more importantly, commuters who will have construction delays and the placement of orange cones shortened considerably.

Alternative Delivery is not suitable for all projects or even most; however, in a handful of projects, such as Polk-Quincy, the 69 Highway project in south Johnson County, South Lawrence Trafficway and I-235 in Wichita, Alternative Delivery could shorten construction and project delivery time by a third or more, without jeopardizing transportation dollars for preservation or other projects throughout Kansas.

We ask for your favorable consideration of SB 375 and also ask the Committee to retain provisions for the limited use of Alternative Delivery in the FORWARD Transportation Program.

Thank you

Whitney Damron

Whitney B. Damron, P.A.
919 South Kansas Avenue
Topeka, Kansas 66612
(785) 224-6666
wbdamron@gmail.com