



Economic Lifelines

*Stimulating Economic Vitality
Through Leadership in Infrastructure Development*

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TESTIMONY

TO: SENATE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

FROM: STEVE KEARNEY
ECONOMIC LIFELINES

RE: SB 375

DATE: FEBRUARY 18, 2020

Madame Chair, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear today. I am Steve Kearney, appearing today on behalf of Economic Lifelines. Economic Lifelines is the umbrella group representing stakeholders in Kansas who want and need strong investment in transportation infrastructure. I am here today to ask for your support of SB 375.

As you all know, the 10-year T-Works program is drawing to a close. Kansas and its citizens have been the beneficiary of forward-thinking legislation that has created three consecutive 10-year programs, and it is critical that we now put a fourth program in place to ensure that we maintain existing infrastructure in the most cost effective way and position ourselves for the smartest and best growth moving forward.

SB 375 provides that 10-year program, but it is far from a repeat or rehash of T-Works or prior programs. Much has changed since the passage of T-Works and those changing dynamics are reflected in this legislation.

SB 375 is a 10-year plan, but it moves to a more flexible and adaptive 2-year cycle for project selection. This will allow KDOT to be nimble and responsive in selecting the best

projects at any given time during the program. It will meet the emerging needs of our communities instead of being forced to predict them 10 years into the future.

SB 375 ensures we keep the promises made under T-Works. All projects from that program are to be completed in 2023. This keeps the faith with our communities and stakeholders who were promised projects under the current program.

SB 375 puts maintenance first. The most cost-effective use of infrastructure dollars is proper and timely maintenance of existing infrastructure. By ensuring that maintenance needs are the first dollars committed under this program we are maximizing the value of the taxpayer dollar.

SB 375 will benefit all parts of the state. The promise to spend at least \$8 million per county that has been present in past plans will continue under SB 375. The inclusion of broadband investment will provide rural communities new opportunities to benefit. This plan benefits all Kansans.

SB 375 raises no new taxes. By ending the transfer of sales tax money out of the transportation plan, SB 375 provides funding for the 10-year program without asking for any new tax or revenue increases. It all starts with ending the transfers from the highway fund and closing the Bank of KDOT.

This legislation will be instrumental in promoting public safety. It will facilitate investment in airports that are used for air ambulance services, better signage for drivers to see and use, and several other items that will maximize the likelihood that our Kansas infrastructure users make it home safe and sound.

A 10-year plan is needed right now. It cannot wait for a future legislative session. At some point the federal government will pass a new infrastructure bill which will almost certainly include opportunities to get federal dollars for projects which are already in the pipeline. Right now, outside of the remaining T-Works projects, Kansas has no projects ready to meet that opportunity. SB 375 will ensure Kansas retains the excellent infrastructure for which it is known as well as putting us in position to take advantage of future opportunities as they come along.

We urge your support for SB 375. Thank you for your time today, and I'd be happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.