



**The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce
Support for HB 2588: Providing for the FORWARD Transportation Program
House Committee on Appropriations
Tuesday, February 18, 2020**

The KC Chamber, representing over 2,000 businesses in the greater Kansas City area (40% in Kansas), is pleased to provide this testimony in support of House Bill 2588 to provide for the FORWARD transportation program, which will plan, develop and operate a 21st Century multimodal transportation system within the State of Kansas and provide for the construction, improvement, and maintenance of the state highway system.

Our members tell us every day that the biggest issue they face in relation to economic and overall quality of life in the Kansas City region is the lack of a robust transportation network. Transportation connects every aspect of our lives and determines actions like where we live, where we work, where we shop, etc. Currently, transportation infrastructure shortcomings are affecting the ability of our businesses to attract the 21st Century workforce they need, while also preventing those who need work from being able to access available jobs in other parts of the region. Because of this, the KC Chamber has included transportation as one of its top five regional priorities, which are known as the KC Chamber Big 5 Initiatives. This Chamber's regional transportation initiative is focusing on finding innovated ways to increase mobility across the metro and connect the workforce to jobs available.

Part of the KC Chamber's transportation initiative is to investigate and recommend regional mobility revenue strategies to address the region's current transportation infrastructure challenges as well as plan for future investment and development. To remain competitive in a 21st Century economy, it's vital the state adequately fund its transportation systems. Unfortunately, since 2011, nearly \$2 billion has been transferred out of the State Highway Fund leaving \$435 million worth of projects from T-WORKS that are still unfinished. With an estimated \$18 billion in transportation needs in the state (not including routine maintenance) the KC Chamber is confident that FORWARD gets transportation priorities in Kansas back on track.

FORWARD creates an innovative, flexible and responsive program in which major projects are selected every two years, rather than being ranked one time in a decade. FORWARD will also provide more resources to communities through initiatives such as the Cost-Share Program, the Local Bridge Improvement Program, and the Strategic Safety Program. In addition to these programs and local collaboration on projects, each county in Kansas will receive at least \$8 million worth of projects to directly help address local needs. In our fast-moving economy, the Chamber believes the flexible and innovative design of FORWARD will allow Kansas to respond to infrastructure needs with a more nimble and effective approach that allows the state to address critical growth and safety needs more effectively.

Because of FORWARD, Kansas will see growth in job access for the state's workforce, increases in the mobility of people and goods, and encouragement for economic development, all of which will position the state as an innovation leader and show that it is "open for business." On behalf of the KC Chamber Board of Directors, we urge the committee and Kansas Legislature to look favorably upon HB 2588 and are pleased to offer our resources and insights through our Big 5 Transportation Initiative to assist the state in its planning for the future of mobility in Kansas.

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