

February 18, 2020

Honorable Sen. Carolyn McGinn
Chairwoman, Senate Ways & Means Committee
Kansas Capitol Building, Room 548-S
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Chairwoman McGinn and members of the Senate Ways & Means Committee:

On behalf of the Highway 69 Association, representing businesses and communities from across several counties throughout Southeast Kansas, I encourage you to support SB 375 and the FORWARD transportation plan proposed by Secretary Lorenz.

The reasons to support a new transportation plan (and support it now) are many, including economic development, population growth and connectivity. Pittsburg State University remains the state's only Regents university not served by a four-lane highway. You may not realize that we now have more Johnson County students at Pittsburg State than we do from Crawford County. As a result, thousands of students and their families travel Highway 69 on a consistent basis and they have a right to a safe highway. Pittsburg State is now attracting a number of students from Northwest Arkansas and many of those students use Highway 69 from the south to get to Pittsburg, adding even more traffic to a busy two-lane road.

Population projections show that over the next 20 years, the population of Johnson County will nearly double and Crawford County's population will grow by more than 20%. That's a clear indication of how both ends of the Highway 69 corridor are growing and it's imperative that we continue that growth for the economic well-being of the state. That's why every county along the Highway 69 route has supported this project from the beginning.

But no reason is greater than that of safety for Kansans and those traveling through our great state. Over the past six years alone, the two-lane stretch of Highway 69 from Fort Scott to I-44 has seen over 1,200 crashes, resulting in 337 injuries and 11 fatalities. That is unacceptable and we must do better.

The FORWARD plan will give KDOT the resources necessary to address critical needs like this and I encourage you to support SB 375...for the benefit of all Kansans.

Sincerely,

Ken W. Brock
Chairman, Highway 69 Association