



**Testimony in Support of SB 375  
Senate Ways and Means Committee  
February 18, 2020**

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

The Chambers of Commerce of Manhattan, Emporia, Topeka, and Lawrence (METL) express their support for Senate Bill 375, which enacts the Kansas Department of Transportation's FORWARD transportation program.

Transportation is among the four legislative priorities the METL Coalition has identified for this legislative session. METL is determined to fight for inclusion in the new transportation plan of: the replacement of the I-70 / Polk / Quincy Viaduct and the expansion of the west leg of the South Lawrence Traffic way (K10) from two lanes to four. The FORWARD plan is a reasonable approach to balancing the myriad demands for project funding across the state with inevitable budgetary restrictions. The plan also ensures the state highway plan is flexible enough to take into account changing needs in localities across Kansas.

METL's priorities also include strong opposition to further diversion of funding from transportation. The legislature's diversion of monies from the state's highway fund in recent years has had a debilitating effect on KDOT's capacity to keep up with growing demands for highway repair and construction. Governor Kelly's commitment to end these diversions over the next several years is a much-appreciated step in the right direction and was undoubtedly informed by many complex factors. Nevertheless, METL's position in this regard is not nuanced. We call anew for the immediate cessation of diversion of funds effective with this year's budget, not a future one.

The four Chambers that make up the METL Coalition represent more than 3,000 Kansas businesses. Safe, undisrupted flow of people and goods across our highways is critical to our communities' growth and future prosperity. We look forward to engaging fully with the secretary and our legislative delegation to see the FORWARD plan brought to life and our two important highway projects brought to fruition.

Please support Senate Bill 375.

Respectfully,

METL - The Chambers of Commerce of Manhattan, Emporia, Topeka and Lawrence

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