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KANSAS CITY



PROPONENT TESTIMONY

House Appropriations Committee

HB 2588

An Act concerning transportation; providing for the FORWARD transportation program

Bridgette Williams
Executive Director
Heavy Constructors Association of Greater Kansas City
www.ksheavyconstruction.com

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Good morning Chairman Waymaster and Members of the Committee:

I am Bridgette Williams, executive director of the Heavy Constructors Association of Greater Kansas City and I appear before you today in support of HB 2588, which would enact the state's fourth ten-year comprehensive transportation plan to succeed the T-WORKS program adopted by the Kansas Legislature in 2010.

By way of information, the Heavy Constructors is a highway-heavy utility chapter of the Associated General Contractors of America and the American Road and Transportation Builders Association. Our offices are located in Kansas City, Missouri. However, our members, their employees, including thousands of highly skilled transportation workers live throughout the greater Kansas City and many of our member companies and their employees reside in Kansas.

If there is a major highway, bridge, street, airport, water and wastewater system or major dam, lake or reservoir project undertaken in our geographical area it is likely one or more of our members are a leading contractor on the project.

As executive director of the Heavy Constructors and a resident of Wyandotte County, I would like to add my personal support to HB 2588 and encourage this committee to give careful consideration to this legislation developed after thousands of hours of work, meetings and consultations held by and between representatives of KDOT, the Kansas Legislature and transportation stakeholders over the past two years.

While the Heavy Constructors primarily are engaged in projects in eastern Kansas, I was privileged to be a part of the Joint Legislative Transportation Vision Task Force that met in 2019 and received testimony from throughout Kansas highlighting the transportation needs of our state that have been neglected or delayed due to lack of funding.



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HB 2588 takes a unique approach to transportation funding by working to develop a project pipeline that can be funded as the plan is implemented and adaptable to address changing needs of our communities. The Legislature can modify spending based upon economic requirements for the State, but at the same time, with a two-year rolling program, KDOT can work with local communities and transportation interests on implementation timelines and maintain a steady, yet manageable pipeline of projects.

A long-term program like the comprehensive transportation plans adopted by the Legislature in 1989, 1999, 2010 and now under consideration in 2020 allow for companies involved in designing and building transportation infrastructure to invest in personnel, equipment and plan for future projects. Without a strong commitment to a forward-looking plan, construction workers and companies will leave the state and seek opportunities elsewhere or go out of business altogether.

The commitment to preservation dollars in HB 2588 are helpful, but the opportunity for major projects that involve multiple companies and professionals are a welcome addition to KDOT's planning process, as they have generally been set aside for the past four or five years for lack of funding.

A critical piece of HB 2588 and the FORWARD Kansas Transportation Program is the inclusion of authority for KDOT to utilize alternative delivery in projects as appropriate. This authority is not appropriate for all projects. However, for complex projects, such as the Gateway Project completed in the past couple of years in Johnson County, alternative delivery can shorten the construction time significantly and save significant sums and/or allow for project enhancements otherwise unavailable within KDOT's budget. It is estimated the use of alternative delivery in the Gateway Project saved a year in construction time. KDOT estimates a similar project today could save two years on such a project.

Johnson County, Douglas County, Shawnee County and Sedgwick County and possibly others have major projects under development that will require significant investment of Federal, State and Local dollars. These kinds of projects are ideally suited for alternative delivery, as it can save a year or more on each of those projects and tens of millions of driving hours and reduce the timeline for orange cones, all of which inure to the benefit of Kansans and those who use our transportation infrastructure.

Critics suggest alternative delivery will drain KDOT of funds and leave the State unable to sustain a comprehensive transportation program and alternative delivery favors out-of-state contractors. Neither points are accurate. The estimated \$550 million a year for preservation in the FORWARD plan ensures transportation investment will be maintained throughout the lifetime of the program and most any of the Kansas contractors capable of providing a responsible bid for a major project are already involved with alternative design projects. A recent article in the Kansas City Star suggested the 69 Highway Project in south Johnson County could cost more than \$300 million. A project of that size and scope demands alternative delivery if it is ever to be built. A handful of other projects of similar size and scope are in the same position.

In closing, the Heavy Constructors commends this Committee for its interest in this legislation and we encourage you to advance it to the floor for further consideration. We also would ask the Committee to maintain some authority for KDOT to utilize alternative delivery on projects where appropriate.

I would be pleased to stand for questions at the appropriate time. Thank you.