

MINUTES

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON A NEW COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

December 15, 2008

Finney County Fairgrounds—Garden City, Kansas

Members Present

Representative Gary Hayzlett, Vice-Chairperson
Senator Laura Kelly
Senator Janis Lee
Senator Derek Schmidt
Senator Ruth Teichman
Representative Elaine Bowers
Representative Mike Burgess
Representative Margaret Long
Representative Julie Menghini
Representative Don Myers
Representative Jene Vickrey
Representative Vince Wetta

Staff Present

Hank Avila, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Jill Shelley, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Bruce Kinzie, Office of the Revisor of Statutes
Mary Jane Brueck, Committee Secretary

Morning Session

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairperson Gary Hayzlett at 10:00 a.m. Vice-Chairperson Hayzlett, who presided, opened the meeting and asked members of the Committee to introduce themselves.

Vice-Chairperson Hayzlett introduced the first conferee, Bonnie Burgardt, Transportation Director, Finney County Transit. She welcomed the Committee to Garden City and explained the different set of challenges faced by the Garden City/Western Kansas population, especially in public transportation (Attachment 1).

Jack Taylor, from Liberal, represented the Southwest Passage Initiative for Regional and Interstate Transportation (S.P.I.R.I.T.), the four-state coalition promoting four lanes for U.S. Highway

54 from Wichita to El Paso, Texas. He explained the need for four-lane highways in the region, especially connecting the southwestern Kansas counties to Wichita in order to attract new business to the area. He listed six top projects that he said would benefit all of southwestern Kansas ([Attachment 2](#)).

Steve Phillips, President of the Kansas Association of Airports, explained the needs for funding for airport maintenance and improvements ([Attachment 3](#)).

Jennifer Schartz, Barton County Commissioner, spoke in support of a plan to build a portion of the Northwest Passage from Hutchinson to Sterling. She also discussed the damage to a heavily used two-mile stretch of county-maintained sand road connecting U.S. Highways 281 and 56-156 ([Attachment 4](#)).

Mayor Robert Pivonka began the presentation for the City of Larned. He told of the need for better roadways for people working in Larned but living out of town, for tourists, and for agriculture. He introduced Don Gaeddert, Larned City Manager, who outlined programs and projects the Larned City Council deems a priority. Kurt Demel, Pawnee County Highway Administrator, then spoke of the traffic problems in and near Larned ([Attachment 5](#)).

Cheri Rhea, City Council member from Sharon Springs, introduced several supporters for the funding of the reconstruction of a 30-mile section of K-27 in Wallace County ([Attachment 6](#)).

Howard Partington, Great Bend City Administrator, spoke in support of the Northwest Passage/K-96 as well as other projects of importance to the area ([Attachment 7](#)).

Jeanette Siemens, Kiowa County Economic Development Director, spoke on the importance of construction of Highway 54/400 to support residents and businesses to locate and rebuild in Greensburg after the destruction caused by the 2007 tornado. Information about discussions held with KDOT to reconstruct that highway is available from Ms. Siemens ([Attachment 8](#)).

Brian Hoffman from the Pratt Chamber of Commerce spoke in regard to the concern of the city in relation to Highways K-64, K-61, and US-54 ([Attachment 9](#)).

Harry Hunsley spoke to the need of transportation projects in both Russell County and the City of Russell ([Attachment 10](#)).

Kim Goodnight, Ford County Commissioner, told the Committee of the need for transportation improvements in Dodge City and Ford County ([Attachment 11](#)).

Brandon Buchanan, City Administrator, City of Oakley, said the economic growth and development of Oakley and the western Kansas region is dependent on improvements to US-83 ([Attachment 12](#)).

Mark Hall, City Manager of the City of Liberal, said Liberal will be joining Dodge City and Garden City in a regional presentation. Commissioner Larry Koochel spoke first regarding the need for improvements to US Highway 54. David Crase, Mayor of Garden City, also supported the need for improvement of US-54 ([Attachment 13](#)).

Vice-Chairperson Hayzlett opened the meeting to discussion. Committee member question topics included whether both US-50 and US-54 need four lanes, a study on the proposed Northwest Passage from Wichita to Hays, and the role of transit in the southwest region.

Joe Cabrinha, City Council Member, City of Atwood, explained the need for improvement to

U.S. Highway 36 and Kansas Highway 25, the “lifelines” to that community. Other concerns also were addressed ([Attachment 14](#)).

Next to speak was Junior Strecker, Mayor of Scott City, and also representing Scott County. He said the area is served by Kansas Highway 96 east and west and U.S. Highway 83 north and south. Highway 96 seems to be adequate; Highway 83 is the real concern. He testified that an average of 1,100 trucks go through the city daily. The highway has a real need for four lanes or at least passing lanes. Highway 83 is essential to the continued economic development of the city. City-county special revenue tax also is very important to the community.

Gary Berning, Council Member from the City of Leoti, spoke on needs for improvements to Kansas Highway 96 ([Attachment 15](#)).

Mark Coberly, Gove County Commissioner, presented the needs of that area. He said the county’s main concern is Kansas Highway 23, which needs resurfacing and widening (a three-foot shoulder on either side), due to increased truck traffic ([Attachment 16](#)).

Troy Dewey, incoming Sheridan County Commissioner, said that county would like to see shoulders added to Kansas Highway 23 from the northern edge of Sheridan County to Highway 156, at least three feet wide. He said K-23 is traveled heavily by county residents and that the truck traffic has increased over three times in the past ten years.

Vice-Chairperson Hayzlett announced there was not enough time to hear another conferee before lunch and adjourned the Committee until 1:00 p.m.

Afternoon Session

Vice-Chairperson Hayzlett called the committee to order at 1:00 p.m.

Steve Cottrell, City Engineer, City of Garden City, spoke about the importance of the continuation of city and county specialty highway funds; KLINK projects; geometric improvement projects; economic development projects; and practical design options as used by the Missouri Department of Transportation ([Attachment 17](#)).

Cliff Mayo, Finney County Commissioner, welcomed everyone to Finney County and spoke about needs of southwest Kansas. He noted that southwest Kansas is the only area in Kansas that does not have a connection of one four-lane highway to another four-lane highway. Most often four-lane highways are in the more populous areas. Southwest Kansas is primarily an agricultural area. It needs four-lane highways (highways 400, 54, and 83 in particular) for trucks that haul commodities and industrial shipments such as windmill components.

David Crase, Mayor of Garden City, told the Committee about Garden City, Dodge City, and Liberal forming a coalition to work together for representation in Topeka. He said the coalition is open for other cities to join as well. They agree there is a need for a comprehensive transportation plan and that it should focus on the regional economic effect, and on the value southwest Kansas adds to the state. He said that if four-lane roads were available, businesses could receive and ship goods more quickly and at a lower cost; consumers could travel more quickly to retail and service outlets in regional hubs, such as Wichita, and would be less likely to go out of state; and workers could travel more quickly, cheaply, and safely to work outside their own hometowns. The question was asked about the connection between economic development and four-lane roads. He said one

out of two people who contact the Garden City economic development director ask about four-lane roads, air service, and short line railroads, and that many businesses are not interested in locating to an area with no four-lane access.

Mr. Crase was asked about the possibility of making roads four lanes with tolls. He replied that support exists for toll roads.

Shannon Francis, Seward County Commissioner, was not able to be at this Committee meeting, but sent a letter that was read to the Committee by Mr. Taylor. He endorsed the concept of US-54 as a four-lane expressway from Kingman to Liberal and improvements to unimproved gaps between Kingman and Mullinville (Attachment 18).

Earl Willis testified on the importance of making US-50 four lanes, first from Garden City to Dodge City and from Hutchinson to Emporia and then along its entire length. He presented an update on a similar effort for US-50 in Colorado (Attachment 19).

Woody Moses, Managing Director for Kansas Aggregate Producers Association and the Kansas Ready Mixed Concrete Association, presented information on zoning and the availability of sand and aggregate for transportation projects (Attachment 20).

Ron Straight, Transportation Manager for Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas, said that 10 percent of counties in Kansas have no form of public transportation for residents. Rides in Hays and in Ellis County increased 21 percent since 2007, as compared with 6 percent nationally.

Bob Strevey, Chairperson of the Economic Development Committee for Decatur County, spoke in favor of development of U.S. Highway 36. He said it is a lifeline for much of northwest Kansas and is vital to economic development in that part of the state. He added that Indiana has changed Highway 36 into a four-lane highway now called Interstate 72, and that Missouri is in the process of changing all of Highway 36 into a four-lane highway and expects to have the work completed by 2010. He said making Highway 36 four lanes in Kansas would make the highway safer due to all the truck traffic. Nebraska has asked for support in developing a connector link between Interstate Highways 80 and 70; he also spoke in support of developing Highway 83 as that link and in favor of expanding the Oakley Airport.

Larry Hoeme, a Scott County Commissioner, spoke of the traffic on U.S. Highway 83 and the need for improvement to even a divided four-lane highway. He said this route will become an energy corridor as the development of wind energy and other energy developments continue. As far as funding, the county would not recommend a limited-access road.

Matt Allen, City Manager, Garden City, came forward to talk about air service in western Kansas. He urged that air transportation funding be maintained.

Commissioner Wiley McFarland from Gray County distributed a copy of the transportation resolution passed by Gray County (Attachment 21).

Joe Finley, Director of Engineering Services for the City of Dodge City, said Dodge City supports the tri-city agreement with Liberal and Garden City. He spoke about the economic development picture and concerns about roadways and highways to get people to the future casino to be built in Dodge City.

Vice-Chairperson Hayzlett adjourned the meeting at 3:50 p.m. The next meeting will be December 18, 2008, in Pittsburg, Kansas.

Prepared by Mary Jane Brueck
Edited by Jill Shelley

Approved by Committee on:

January 8, 2009
(Date)