

To: Joint Legislative Transportation Vision Task Force

From: Debra Teufel, President/CEO, Hutchinson Reno County Chamber of Commerce

Date: October 4, 2018

Location: Newton, Kansas

Subject: Oral Testimony in support of the K-14/K-96 Highway Enhancement from Hutchinson to Lyons
ORAL TESTIMONY BY DEBRA TEUFEL, PRESIDENT/CEO, HUTCHINSON/RENO COUNTY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

On behalf of the Hutchinson/Reno County Chamber of Commerce, I appear today to ask your consideration for continued support for the K-14/K-96 Corridor Improvements between Hutchinson to Lyons, commonly referred to as the Northwest Passage, as an important gateway between Reno County and the communities to our North and West. This corridor is important to the labor basin serving our many members and industries, as well as a key corridor for commerce and transportation of goods.

Our delegation represents nearly 700 Reno County area businesses and industry, non-profit organizations, public governing bodies and constituents.

Hutchinson is a key healthcare service provider for a large primary trade region with our largest employer being Hutchinson Regional Healthcare System, an education hub as the home of the Hutchinson Community College and the Hutchinson Career and Technical Education Academy, a tourism driver for our State with two of the wonders of Kansas – the Cosmosphere Space Museum and Stratata Underground Salt Museum, which bring over 100,000 visitors to Reno County annually. Hutchinson is also the home of the Kansas State Fair bringing over 300,000 visitors annually from across Kansas and importantly from rural Western Kansas.

Reno County is also a major contributor to the economic development of Central and South Central Kansas as home to many large industries across diverse sectors including agriculture, manufacturing, commodity processing, wind energy, advanced technology/IT, and warehousing, transportation and logistics.

These industries all require safe and modern transportation amenities to continue to keep our economy productive and growing, and as you know transportation infrastructure is a key element for industrial site selection. Companies like Siemens Gamesa which employ nearly 400 people, manufacturer large wind energy nacelles requiring wide lanes for delivery of their product to wind farms across the State and region. Kuhn Krause employing over 300 is a global producer of tillage equipment for the ag industry and need quality highways for transport of their value able products to agricultural customers across the State and globe. Companies like Collins Bus and Tyson Foods also employ nearly 500 each and produce goods that require essential quality highways.

I have provided support letters from other members including the City of Hutchinson, Reno County, Hutchinson Community College, and compelling written testimony about what the enhancements to K-14 would mean to these partners. I am joined today by Mr. Terry David, the Chief of Reno County Emergency Medical Services and Mr. Richard Shank of the Hutchinson Regional Health Care System who have also provided written testimony.

As you know, excellent roads and highways are an absolute must in order to deliver healthcare to an aging population where speed to treatment and safety are of the utmost importance. Hutchinson Regional Medical Center and Reno County EMS transport several thousand patients from rural Reno County to the hospital for emergency medical care. Also, medical vehicles from area towns including Sterling, Lyons, Ellinwood and Great Bend bring patients to Hutchinson for emergency treatments.

Roads with wide shoulders are important so as to allow motorists to make a complete stop to allow ambulances to safely pass. Many times a matter of a few seconds or minutes may make the difference between life and death.

This corridor enhancement was a priority project in 2010 and the needs along K-96 remain, with traffic counts increasing and safety enhancements vital to enhancing this area for growth for years to come.

We had high hopes this issue would be resolved in the current Transportation Plan when it was approved for implementation. When Right of Ways were purchased, we were even more encouraged. Then, it was necessary to postpone the enhancements as a result of budgetary issues. I request serious consideration to place the Highway 14 enhancement high on your list to be implemented in the next plan under consideration. Rural citizens who live in these towns or on farms and ranches in between deserve access to medical care in the same way as those who reside in metropolitan areas with multiple options.

Enhancements to Highway 14 between Hutchinson and Lyons are overdue and we ask your favorable consideration for this project. I encourage you to favorably consider the Highway 14/K-96 Corridor Improvements as a priority to continue to support the economic vitality of Central and South-Central Kansas for the future.

Thank you for listening to our request and I wish you much success as you prioritize next steps for our State.

Thank you for providing an opportunity to present our point of view on this very important issue to our community, the residents of Reno County, our neighboring counties and for your consideration of the voices of business, industry, education, and healthcare services who are represented by our Hutch Chamber.

Respectfully,

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