

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**REGARDING HOUSE BILL 2296
PERMITTING THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION TO CONTRACT WITH THE
KANSAS TURNPIKE AUTHORITY TO ENFORCE TOLL PAYMENTS AND PERMITTING THE
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION TO USE TOLLS TO SUPPORT PUBLIC TRANSIT AND
OTHER IMPROVEMENTS ON A TOLL PROJECT**

February 16, 2021

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

I am Julie Lorenz, Secretary of the Kansas Department of Transportation. Thank you for allowing me to testify in support of HB 2296.

For some background on why this bill is important, we need to look back at the tolling legislation passed in the 2019 session. This statute (KSA 68-20, 120) grants new authority to KDOT to develop toll projects in Kansas. In the development of that legislation, common sense checks and balances were built into the process such as no existing lane of any state highway can be tolled and that toll projects must include at least one public meeting.

At the request of and in partnership with Overland Park, KDOT and KTA have initiated the first managed lanes study in Kansas and we are learning more about the practical implications of the legislation. We are also finding room for some improvement to give communities more flexibility to meet community needs.

First, this bill would give the Secretary of Transportation authority to contract with KTA for tolling. It gives explicit, written authority on toll collection for these new projects. While it was contemplated when the original bill passed that KDOT and KTA would partner, we are adding this clarification in statute for future projects.

Second, and most importantly, this bill allows money collected from tolls to support public transit or other transportation improvements on that specific corridor to keep traffic moving smoothly on the corridor. We want to enable a community that chooses tolling to have flexibility to use the revenue as part of their future cost-share for corridor improvements after their commitment to pay their initial cost-share portion is achieved.

Finding new ways to fund infrastructure is becoming increasingly important. With the projected decline in federal and state gas tax revenue due to electric vehicles, we must find new ways to pay for

our infrastructure at the state and local level. Managed lanes are one new tool for communities to help fund key upgrades with the use of toll revenue and to address congestion concerns in the long-term.

Addressing congestion concerns are where the real long-term savings to the state and community can be significant. By providing a free-flow option for drivers, KDOT and the community won't have to continue building expensive additional lanes in the future.

Third, this bill would permit KDOT to allow local transit partners to operate in the express lanes without being charged the toll. In other states, this has become a way to encourage transit on popular corridors to reduce congestion.

This proposed bill allows communities to make a better business case for implementing managed lanes to their residents by providing future flexibility to respond to and balance transportation priorities, funding challenges and traffic management on a specific corridor.

We appreciate all the partnership going into this effort. While these tolling scenarios are not unique in the U.S., they are new to Kansas. We are learning as we go and are grateful for this opportunity to allow the tolling local contribution tool to be more flexible and attractive to communities.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2296. I am happy to stand for questions.