



**Johnson County Government
Testimony in Support of House Bill 2296
February 16, 2021**

As a key partner in the regionally coordinated, multi-jurisdictional RideKC public transportation system, Johnson County, Kansas has long recognized the importance of mobility in the lives of our residents. Access to jobs, education and healthcare are critical to our economy and success as a community, and as a member of the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), Johnson County supports the regional priority of an efficient, effective multimodal transportation program that will increase employer access to our workforce and attract, retain and enhance businesses to our metropolitan area.

Johnson County appreciates the efforts of the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), in collaboration with the Kansas Turnpike Authority (KTA) and the City of Overland Park on their efforts to study how best to address safety and congestion mitigation along U.S. 69 – efforts that build on similar corridor studies spanning two decades. One of the identified potential solutions, express toll lanes, were approved by the legislature as part of K.S.A. 2020 Supp. 68-20, 120; House Bill 2296 would amend K.S.A. 2020 Supp. 68-20 to allow public transportation vehicles to utilize express toll lanes without requiring local government provided transit vehicles to pay the toll.

Additionally HB 2296 would allow the KDOT secretary to “use toll revenue to support public transit or other transportation improvements on the corridor where the toll project or turnpike project was constructed.”

Johnson County, as a member of the regionally coordinated RideKC transit system, operates the South Overland Park Express transit route, which operates within the U.S.69 corridor and would benefit from the adoption of HB 2269.

Johnson County is unique in the state for the economic impact that northeast Kansas has for the entirety of the state, from population growth, to state GDP, to employment growth – between 2016 and 2019, 84% of all new jobs in Kansas were created in Johnson County. At the same time, less than 10% of jobs in the region are accessible by public transportation, and as our population both grows and ages, transportation for older adults will continue to be a challenge.

Additionally, allowing public transportation access to express toll lanes would help to mitigate traffic congestion on U.S. 69, which ranks as the busiest four-lane highway in Kansas.

Thank you for your thoughtful attention to the transportation and mobility needs of Kansans. Johnson County supports the passage of HB 2296 and looks forward to partnering with KDOT, KTA and the City of Overland Park in meeting the transportation and mobility needs of Kansans.

Respectfully,

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