

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
REGARDING HOUSE BILL 2194
RELATING TO THE SAFETY CORRIDOR ACT**

February 12, 2015

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

I am Mike Stringer, District One Engineer for the Kansas Department of Transportation. KDOT is pleased to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2194, which establishes a Safety Corridor Program.

Under the proposed bill, KDOT would be granted the authority to establish a safety corridor program and designate certain routes as safety corridors based upon criteria for those established by the agency. Safety corridor programs in other states have been successful in reducing fatalities, serious injuries and alcohol-related crashes.

Safety corridor legislation was unsuccessfully first sought in 2009. KDOT again sought legislation in 2012 upon the recommendation of a committee of citizens and leaders from Douglas and Johnson counties following the tragic death of 5-year-old Cainan Shutt of Eudora who died in a crossover median traffic crash on K-10 in April 2011. That committee, formed at the request of Governor Brownback, urged KDOT to seek the ability to name K-10 a safety corridor as a means to reducing the number of serious and fatal crashes that occur along this and other corridors throughout our state.

Since 2012, there have been additional fatal accidents that have renewed concerns being expressed to KDOT and other state officials to find a way to help reduce such fatalities. A representative group was formed to review and assess the updated data and provide a recommendation on initiatives needed to accomplish this goal moving forward – with the implementation of a safety corridor being a key recommendation..

Goals of Safety Corridor Programs

KDOT is committed to keeping drivers traveling through Kansas as safe as possible. To the extent that we know certain corridors have higher serious and fatal accident rates, the safety corridor program will be aimed at alerting drivers that they are entering an area designated as a safety corridor that will encourage drivers to pay attention, slow down, and drive safely through the area.

What would the Kansas Safety Corridor Program look like?

KDOT may designate a safety corridor at the recommendation of the Executive Safety Council, based on criteria such as accident and fatality rates, number of collisions resulting in serious injury or death, and

traffic volumes. The Executive Safety Council oversees development and implementation of the Kansas Strategic Highway Safety Plan. For those identified routes that are within the corporate limits of a city, the governing body would need to pass a resolution supporting the designation of the route as a safety corridor. The Secretary would be required to report to the legislature each year on the implementation and operation of the safety corridor program.

A driver entering a safety corridor would be alerted to that fact and that fines are increased in these areas by roadway signage. Any driver stopped for a moving violation within a safety corridor zone will incur a doubled fine. This fine would be collected by city, county, or municipal courts and then turned over to the state to be placed in the safety corridor fund. The safety corridor funds would then be used solely for signing, education and other safety strategies along designated safety corridors.

Other States with Safety Corridor Programs

The Midwest Transportation Consortium in 2008 studied safety corridors and found that 13 states have similar safety corridor programs and many of those have seen tremendous success in reducing injury and fatal traffic crashes.

In addition, the University of Missouri-Columbia's Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering found that since New Mexico has instituted a safety corridor along US 82, fatal crashes declined by 100% in just the first year that the safety corridor program was in place, and between 2002-2007 there was a 42.3% decline in total crashes in all of New Mexico's safety corridors. New Jersey, who passed a safety corridor program in 2003 has seen a downward trend in total crashes of approximately 3 percent per year since its program has been in place. Virginia's safety corridor program has brought an 11 percent reduction in all crashes along I-81.

As other states' programs have shown, by designating safety corridors, increasing fines and enforcement, drivers change their driving habits. The change can result in a reduced number of fatal and serious crashes. Reducing these instances will make Kansas a safer and better place to travel and do business. We ask that you please support HB 2194.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee today. I would be happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.