

**TESTIMONY BEFORE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**REGARDING HOUSE BILL 2450
RELATING TO INCREASING SPEED LIMIT ON CERTAIN MULTILANE HIGHWAYS TO 80
MPH**

FEBRUARY 9, 2016

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) is providing written testimony in opposition of House Bill 2450 (HB2450), which will grant KDOT the discretion to designate any separated multilane highway with a maximum lawful speed limit of 80 miles per hour. The change to 80 mph is also reflected in K.S.A. 8-255 as it relates to moving traffic violations and the 10 mile per hour buffer, meaning a motorist will be able to travel as fast as 89 mph and not be cited for a moving traffic violation.

This legislation will have a significant impact on road design. Raising the upper limit of posted speeds to 80 mph cannot always be applied to every separated multilane highway. Where the 80 mph speed is applied, this change would raise highway construction and reconstruction costs. These costs would increase because with higher highway speeds comes higher criteria for designing those highways.

Some of our roadside hardware such as guardrail is tested at lower speeds under current testing standards, and it is not well understood how various devices may perform on roadways with higher speed limits. Other features such as curves and hills which affect a driver's line of sight, acceleration and deceleration lanes at interchanges are also a concern as our highways were not designed for 80mph speed limits.

Our experience with 75 mph speed limits shows crashes are up over all injury severities where we raised the speed limit to 75 mph. What makes this more significant is during the same period on the entire 10,000 mile State Highway System crashes are down over all severities. Specifically, we have conducted a simple before and after evaluation of crashes on routes where we raised the speed limit to 75 mph on July 1, 2011. Based on 3.5 years of before data and 3.5 years of after data we found where speed limits were raised to 75 mph, fatalities increased from 86 to 105, or about 22 percent. Meanwhile, on the State Highway System as a whole, fatalities decreased from 746 to 706, or about 5 percent.

In response, we have contracted with Kansas State University to conduct research to evaluate the safety effects of raising speed limits on Kansas rural freeways as implemented in the summer of 2011. They will be evaluating many factors, such as speed differential. There is concern that as we raise speed limits beyond that which many feel comfortable driving we will see a greater variance in speeds, resulting in more conflicts and more crashes.

In addition to the Kansas State University research, the Transportation Research Board through its National Cooperative Highway Research Program has initiated research to provide guidance to assist highway agencies in estimating the safety impacts of increasing speed limits to 75 mph or more. Outcomes will include information to support the consideration of where, when, and by how much speed limits may or may not be increased on existing facilities and newly constructed roads.

Kansas State's research should be complete in summer of 2017. TRB's research should be complete in summer of 2019, with interim results released sooner. It is our hope that the legislature will wait on the results of this research, both state and national, before proceeding with a further increase in the maximum posted speed limit in Kansas.