To:      Transportation Task Force

From:    Brent Trout, City Manager, City of Topeka, Kansas
Date:    October 24, 2018
Location: Hays, Kansas

RE: Oral Testimony in support of the Polk Quincy Viaduct in Topeka, KS

The City of Topeka is currently experiencing the beginnings of a rejuvenation of our downtown and north Topeka business districts. The City invested millions of dollars in to a streetscape project that included pavement improvements, signals, sidewalks and pocket parks. The investment has led to significant private investment in the commercial and retail businesses along Kansas Avenue. We have a new 106 room hotel that is nearly complete that will also include a restaurant and meeting space. There are other businesses in the process of construction in the downtown that will start to create an entertainment district that has been missing in Topeka for many years. North Topeka is also beginning to grow in popularity with the creation of an arts district. The growth of these areas is exciting but we need help to take it to the next level. The access to downtown and north Topeka is limited with the current design of Interstate 70 through town. There is not a direct route to the NOTO area which is having an impact on their ability attract visitors to the restaurants and bars in this area. The future growth of the community and these business districts will be greatly assisted by the construction of the Polk Quincy viaduct. In addition to creating growth in our community the new safety improvements of the highway will improve our connections across the state from Manhattan to the Kansas City metropolitan area. The continued growth of the animal technology and bio-technology industry in northeast Kansas would be assisted by the improvements to this portion of the highway. The economic impact will be noticeable at the local and state level.
The Polk Quincy viaduct project has been under consideration for many years and the uncertainty regarding when it might happen is hurting our community. The uncertainty of where the final location of the highway will be has led to a lack of development along the right of way area the project will end up being located in. It is difficult to get people to invest in their buildings when they may need to be torn down in a few years. In addition new development is not occurring because of the same possibility of losing the property. We need to develop a plan for the when the project will be completed and provide this information to the property owners in the area so they can plan accordingly.

The project will require a partnership between the City of Topeka and KDOT. We will need to work together to apply for TIGER, BUILD or other grants to fund this project. The project will affect many in Topeka and across the state of Kansas. There is a tremendous amount of interstate commerce truck traffic that goes through our town each day. Numerous accidents have occurred on the curves that would be improved and we feel strongly that this needs to change. The increase in safety and speed of travel through this area is important to the trucking industry. The partnership between KDOT and the City of Topeka will allow us to be competitive at the federal level for the funding necessary to construct Polk Quincy Viaduct project.

Sincerely,

Brent Trout
City Manager
City of Topeka

Attachment: Polk Quincy Fact Sheet
I-70 POLK QUINCY VIADUCT

FACT SHEET

WHAT IS THIS PROJECT?
The I-70 Topeka Polk-Quincy Viaduct project began as a study in 2009 involving residents, community leaders and stakeholders to assess the needs and possible solutions in the project area.

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), the City of Topeka, and the Metropolitan Topeka Planning Organization have partnered together for this project and understand the community’s concerns regarding location and design. Throughout the project the partners will take into account how any design affects property owners, the land uses around the viaduct, the ability for downtown Topeka to redevelop, and the needs of those who travel through Topeka and use this route. Following the study, KDOT completed right-of-way plans, but right-of-way has yet to be purchased.

WHY IS IT NEEDED?
The I-70 Polk-Quincy Viaduct was designed and built in the late 1950s and early 1960s. After more than 50 years, the condition of the bridge has deteriorated, traffic volumes have increased, highway design criteria have changed and the area around the viaduct has undergone new development and redevelopment.

- Safety
  - Shoulder width on viaduct (2 feet) is less than current criteria (10 feet minimum) and creates a potential safety issue when incidents or maintenance activities occur.
  - Deterioration of bridge elements due to de-icing treatments and increased traffic volumes results in increased maintenance actions requiring significant resources
  - Acceleration/deceleration lanes limited length create traffic operation and safety issues.

- Compliance
  - Design speed of the I-70 curve near 3rd Street (40 mph) is less than current minimum Interstate highway criteria (50) mph. Current design will improve to 55 mph.
  - Interchange ramp spacing (5 interchanges in 1.6 miles) does not comply with current design criteria (1.0 mile distance between intersecting streets that have ramps) and creates conflicts in traffic flow on I-70 and safety concerns.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

- Safety
  - Corrects roadway deficiencies by providing a facility that meets present design criteria
  - Improves the viaduct and the 3rd Street curve
  - Increases traffic capacity by providing high levels of traffic service
  - Reduces pedestrian-vehicle accidents by moving parking lots west of Monroe Street

- Economic Development
  - Provides balanced number of on- and off-ramps, supporting access to downtown
  - Additional access to downtown provides future development opportunities
  - Removes I-70 bridges for a BNSF turntable, saving taxpayers long-term maintenance costs

CONTACT: Jason Peek
Director of Public Works
(785) 368-3111 | jpeek@topeka.org

PROJECT COST

$355 MIL
FY 2022

PROJECTS

2 PROJECTS
Two projects west and east split near 5th Street

PROJECT LENGTH

3.9 MILES
MacVicar Avenue to California Avenue
Downtown Topeka

EXISTENCE

50+ YEARS
Age of the Polk-Quincy Viaduct

MOTORISTS

60K VEHICLES
11% TRUCKS
2040 est. daily travelers for this section of I-70
WHAT’S INCLUDED IN THIS PROJECT?

- 14 ramps (3.84 miles)
- 2 continuous one-way frontage roads (2.5 miles)
- 16 side road (2 miles)
- 12 new bridges, 2 removed bridges, 2 modified bridges and 2 tunnels
- 25 retaining walls (265,420 square foot = 6 football fields)
- 300,000 square yards pavement
- 5-plus miles of concrete storm sewer
- 12 miles of curb and gutter
- 10 miles of concrete safety barrier

PROJECT LOCATION AND AESTHETIC ENHANCEMENTS