



March 12, 2019

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce, thank you for this opportunity to present testimony in support of H.B. 2370, AN ACT concerning motor fuels tax; relating to rates and trip permits; amending K.S.A. 2018 Supp. 79-3492b, 79-34,118 and 79-34,141 and repealing the existing sections.

H.B 2370 would slightly increase the motor fuels tax over three years.

The Chamber stands in strong support of this legislation as we believe traditional and current funding mechanisms for transportation infrastructure projects are insufficient. Without question, the sweeping of sales tax revenue from the state department of transportation has diminished the state's ability to fund transportation needs. We applaud commitments by the governor and legislative leaders to stop these transfers over the next three to five years. Also, vehicles manufactured over the last several years continue to use less and less fuel; some use very little to no fuel at all, decreasing the amount of fuel tax collected by the state.

With this in mind, the state must take an out-of-the-box approach to find acceptable revenue sources to fund the state's significant transportation needs. These needs are statewide. However, the dangerous and deadly North Junction in Sedgwick County best illustrates these needs. This major confluence of where I-135, I-235, K-254, and K-96 meet in North Wichita is a mecca of congestion and deadly accidents. In addition, a tremendous economic development opportunity in south-central Kansas is at best delayed and at worst lost due to the lack of funding for the northwest bypass, a project that would loop 96 highway around west Wichita in Maize and connect it with west 54 highway in Goddard. The project is at a standstill due to lack of funding.

Kansas has a proud history of providing and maintaining a reliable transportation system. The continuation and improvement of such a system is vital to economic development and commerce within the state. A new comprehensive transportation plan is critical to our continued success as a state but will require revenue in excess of current funding sources.

For these reasons and more, we urge the Committee to report H.B. 2370 favorable for passage.

Thank you, and I am happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.

Very truly yours,

Jason P. Watkins  
Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce