

**Kansas FORWARD Program  
Mid-America Regional Council Testimony  
February 18, 2020**

The Mid-America Regional Council serves as the metropolitan planning organization and nonprofit association of city and county governments for the bistate Kansas City region, including Johnson, Leavenworth, Miami and Wyandotte counties. Each year, the MARC Board of Directors adopts state legislative platforms to highlight issues of importance to the region for state legislators in Missouri and Kansas. In addition, most local governments in the Kansas City metro actively support the legislative agendas of state municipal and county leagues. MARC's regional platform is consistent with those agendas.

MARC supports the implementation of an effective multimodal transportation program aligned with the region's priorities, measures to encourage regional approaches to public transit and transportation planning, and the practice of long-term multi-year comprehensive transportation programs developed in collaboration with local governments and other stakeholders. State investment in the regional transportation system will facilitate business access to workforce, access to goods and services and access to external markets for local products. A well-funded, well-planned and well-maintained multimodal transportation system will enhance regional competitiveness by helping attract, retain and grow area businesses.

MARC congratulates the Kansas house, senate, governor and department of transportation for developing a well-considered framework to address the state's most pressing transportation needs. The FORWARD program is broadly consistent with the transportation goals and priorities of the Kansas City region, and MARC was pleased to participate in its development.

MARC supports the key elements of the proposed Kansas FORWARD program:

- **Coordination with local officials on regional priorities.** Regular local consultation and coordination with regional transportation plans will ensure that KDOT remains attuned to the highest shared priorities for transportation investments throughout the state. A list of priority projects totaling over \$2.3 Billion developed through the Kansas City metropolitan planning process is attached for your reference in Table 1 below.
- **Preservation of the transportation system.** Good stewardship of Kansas' existing roads and bridges is vital to support statewide economic activity, safety and personal mobility. Weight-limited bridges impede commerce and rough pavements damage vehicles and increase costs for travelers. We support increased investment in system preservation as proposed in this program.

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- **Flexible, rolling program.** Emerging technologies, an aging population, climate change and extreme weather will all have increasing impacts on communities across Kansas, so the state's transportation program must be flexible, resilient and responsive to changing demands over time. Development of a pipeline of projects that may be periodically added to or adjusted in the program will better position the state to address these changing needs.
- **Focus on safety.** Traffic-related deaths and injuries are tragic and unnecessary. As recently as 2018 there were 63 lives lost to traffic crashes on the Kansas side of our region. By focusing state resources on data-driven safety strategies and partnering with regional coalitions such as Destination Safe, resources dedicated through FORWARD will enable KDOT and its partners to continue to make progress on reducing crashes and saving lives.
- **Commitment to fund multimodal transportation investments, especially transit.** Public transportation plays a growing role in providing access to jobs, a skilled workforce and healthcare services, as well as creating economic development and other opportunities; the state plays a vital role in supporting these services in urban and rural areas. Ridership and demand for public transportation is growing on the Kansas side of our region and so continued state investment in these services is critical to regional prosperity.

Public transportation is the most significant mobility gap in the Kansas City area. Our business community has identified workforce transportation as a key need for regional economic growth. Currently less than 10% of jobs in our region are accessible by public transportation, which in turn limits our businesses access to skilled labor. The transportation needs of older adults continue to grow and change in all parts of the state. As more older adults choose to age in place, alternatives to driving become more urgent and necessary in rural and urban communities of all sizes.

In a recent review of peer regions throughout the U.S., we found that funding for public transit in Greater Kansas City is less than half that of comparable areas. While the weighted average for transit spending of U.S. states is \$61.85 per capita, Kansas spends only \$3.78, ranking 29<sup>th</sup> of 51 states including the District of Columbia. The funding levels for public transportation currently proposed in FORWARD, while vitally needed and greatly appreciated, will not keep pace with these growing demands.

***Therefore, we would encourage the Kansas legislature to further strengthen the FORWARD program by doubling the minimum funding dedicated to public transportation.***

Thank you for your attention to the vital transportation needs of Kansans. We encourage you to support and strengthen the FORWARD program to provide long-term, stable and committed sources of funding to meet these multimodal needs and regional priorities. If you have any questions about MARC's position on this program, please feel free to contact executive director, David Warm, or director of transportation and environment, Ron Achelpohl, at 816-474-4240.

Table 1. Draft Financially Constrained State System Project Priorities – Connected KC 2050 Regional Transportation Plan.

<b>Projects</b>
US 56 & I-35 Interchange Improvements
175th and US-169/K7 Interchange
183rd and US-169/K7 Interchange
K-10 Hwy and Cedar Creek Parkway Interchange
Santa Fe and Parker/K-7 Intersection
US-56, Moonlight Rd to I-35 & New Century interchange
US 56 Improvements- West City Limits to Poplar
Johnson County Gateway Phase 2; inclusive of K-10/K-7 Interchange
US-69 Improvements Phase 1: 135th Street to I-435
I-70/K-7 Interchange KA-1003-10 (Phase 5)
I-70/K-7 Interchange KA-1003-11/15 (Phases 6 and 10)
I-70/K-7 Interchange KA-1003-12 (Phase 7)
Woodland Road and K-10 Interchange
135th Street and I-35 Interchange
119th and K-7 Interchange
167th and US-169/K-7
Moonlight Road/Prairie Star Parkway and K-10 Interchange
I-435/State Ave Diverging Diamond Interchange (DDI)
18th Street Bridge Replacement
I-35 and Gardner Road Diverging Diamond Interchange (DDI)
Lewis and Clark Viaduct Phase 2
Turner Diagonal Corridor Improvements, K-32 to Leavenworth Rd.
Various State Highway System Improvements in Wyandotte County