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NEW REPORT DOCUMENTS RECENT IMPROVEMENTS IN KANSAS' ROADS AND BRIDGES AND CHALLENGES STILL FACED BY STATE IN PROVIDING A WELL-MAINTAINED, SAFE AND EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Wichita, KS – Kansas has made progress in improving state road and bridge conditions, largely through increased transportation funding provided by the T-WORKS program, which was authorized by the state legislature in 2010. But, the state still faces challenges in addressing traffic safety, state and local road and bridge conditions, and further modernizing the state's transportation system to support economic growth, finds a new report released today by [TRIP](http://tripnet.org), a Washington, DC-based national transportation organization.

According to the TRIP report, "[*Modernizing Kansas' Transportation System: Progress and Challenges in Providing Safe, Efficient and Well-Maintained Roads, Highways and Bridges*](#)," since the T-WORKS program was passed by the Kansas legislature in 2010, it has allowed for the completion of over 1,000 transportation projects, the improvement of nearly 8,000 miles of roads, and the repair or replacement of nearly 600 bridges. But, further improvements to the state's transportation program are jeopardized by the uncertainty over future levels of funding from the federal surface transportation program, which expires in May 2015.

Twenty-nine percent of Kansas' major locally and state-maintained urban roads and highways have pavements in poor condition, while an additional 46 percent of the state's major roads are rated in mediocre or fair condition and the remaining 25 percent are rated in good condition. Road conditions across the state have been improved largely through funding provided by the T-WORKS program, which allocates approximately \$7.8 billion to highway preservation, modernization and expansion projects throughout Kansas over a 10-year period. Funding provided by the T-WORKS program allowed Kansas to improve 7,714 miles of state-maintained roadway since 2010. Through the second half of the 10-year program, the state plans to make improvements to an additional 5,000 miles of roadways.

Seventeen percent of locally and state-maintained bridges in Kansas show significant deterioration or do not meet current design standards. Ten percent of Kansas' bridges are structurally deficient, meaning there is significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components. Structurally deficient bridges are often posted for lower weight or closed to traffic, restricting or redirecting large vehicles, including commercial trucks and emergency services vehicles. The Kansas Department of Transportation in 2014 set aside \$10 million to reduce the number of deficient locally-maintained bridges. The additional funding will allow improvements to 77 locally-maintained bridges. Seven percent of Kansas' bridges are functionally obsolete. Bridges that are functionally obsolete no longer meet current highway design standards, often because of narrow lanes, inadequate clearances or poor alignment. Funding provided by the T-WORKS program has allowed the state to repair or replace 559 bridges since 2010.

"While we have always considered safety and mobility key components of transportation infrastructure planning, in the past several years we are more and more concerned with the implications on economic impact and business development with the limited dollars we have to spend," said Sedgwick County Commissioner Tim Norton. "Looking at transportation projects through an economic impact lens has made the choosing of projects and expenditure of funds more

complicated for sure, but also insures an additional return on the investment besides safety and traffic movement.”

Kansas’ traffic fatality rate is significantly higher than the national average, and the fatality rate on the state’s rural roads is approximately three times higher than on all other roads in the state. Between 2008 and 2012, 1,993 people were killed in traffic crashes in Kansas, an average of 399 fatalities per year. Kansas’ overall traffic fatality rate of 1.32 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel in 2012 is significantly higher than the national average of 1.13. The traffic fatality rate on Kansas’ non-Interstate rural roads in 2012 was approximately three times higher than on all other roads and highways in the state – 2.26 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel compared to 0.74. It is estimated that roadway features are likely a contributing factor in approximately one-third of all fatal and serious traffic crashes. Improving safety features on the state’s roads and highways would likely result in a decrease in traffic fatalities and serious crashes.

“Quality transportation routes for motor vehicles, rail and air are a key and vital components in economic growth and development of communities in Kansas,” said Harvey County Commissioner George “Chip” Westfall. “Federal dollars that fund all such routes are needed to assist state and local planners in design, construction and maintenance on our transportation system. We encourage Congress to continue current support of the Highway Fund and to re-invest into the program later this year with an improved federal transportation plan.”

The federal government is a critical source of funding for Kansas’ roads, highways and bridges and provides a significant return to Kansas in road and bridge funding based on the revenue generated in the state by the federal motor fuel tax. Congress recently approved the Highway and Transportation Funding Act of 2014, an eight-month extension of MAP-21 (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act), the long-term federal surface transportation program, on which states rely for road, highway, bridge and transit funding. The program, initially set to expire on September 30, 2014, will now run through May 31, 2015. From 2008 to 2012, the federal government provided \$1.22 for road improvements in Kansas for every dollar the state paid in federal motor fuel fees.

Many needed projects throughout the state will require significant federal funding in order to proceed. These projects include the reconstruction of mainline US-69 in Kansas City, the completion of the Gateway Project to modernize Kansas’ portion of the highway network in the Kansas City area, the reconstruction and modernization of a portion of I-70 in Topeka, the construction of a bypass around the northwest portion of Wichita connecting US-54 to I-235/K-96, the reconstruction of the I-135/I-235/K-254/K-96 interchange in Wichita, and the construction of highway bypasses around Pratt, Kingman and Pittsburg. A full list of projects threatened by a lack of federal funding can be found in the report’s [Appendix](#).

“In recent years, the Kansas legislature has provided funding that was instrumental in improving the state’s surface transportation system,” said Will Wilkins, TRIP’s executive director. “In order for the state to continue its progress in maintaining and modernizing this system, adequate funding must be made available at the local, state and federal levels of government. The quality of life of the state’s residents and the health of Kansas’ economy are riding on it.”