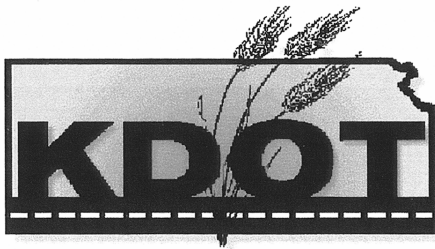


KDOT Partnership Project External Interviews

Summary Report

Conducted for

The Kansas Department of Transportation



by

ETC Institute
TransTech Management
HNTB Corporation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the KDOT Partnership Project, members of the ETC Team conducted one-on-one interviews with key external stakeholders to gather information on issues and concerns regarding KDOT and how the agency interacts with its external partners. Interviews were conducted face-to-face during June and July, 2003. A standard set of questions were asked of 24 key transportation partners across the state. These people were selected based on their depth of experience in working with KDOT as well as to ensure broad geographic interests and varied perspectives were represented. Participants included other government partners (at the Federal, county, city, metropolitan planning organization levels, as well as the Kansas Turnpike Authority), transportation providers (such as transit, the rail and trucking industries, and others), contractors, suppliers and consulting engineers, and other interests such as the media.

Most importantly, key stakeholders reported that KDOT performs very well and that wholesale changes are not needed. For example, one interviewee commented, “*KDOT rates pretty highly... [I] don’t want to see the department disrupted.*” In general, interviewees identified the following strengths and developing trends as particularly important to KDOT’s success:

- **Employees** are very knowledgeable, approachable and professional, and are committed to public service. Time and time again, key transportation partners highlighted how much they value working with KDOT professionals and how much they enjoy the professional relationships that have developed over the years. As one stakeholder noted, “*[KDOT is] better trained, equipped and funded [than many other state DOTs]. They are well prepared for meetings, know the regs and do their homework...*”
- **System preservation** is a hallmark of KDOT’s transportation program. A key transportation leader noted, “*[KDOT is] a leader in the nation on system preservation... A+.*” Another interviewee pointed out that, “*They (KDOT) maintain their system well*” as compared to other DOTs.
- **More open communication is a positive trend that most stakeholders commented on sometime during the interviews.** From the new Secretary who brings “*a breath of fresh air*” to open communication and a spirit of working together with transportation partners to more open staff throughout the agency; KDOT is viewed as a more open agency than in the past. As one stakeholder summed up, “*[I am] pleased with the new path. It was really a struggle before for newspapers and the public across the state to get information, but now it is much easier.*”
- **KDOT’s ability to “keep politics out”** of the transportation arena was identified as a difficult and extremely important effort that has helped KDOT maintain the integrity of their system. As one interviewee pointed out, “*[KDOT has] not politicized project selection... They are fiscally constrained... [they figure out the] type of work that needs to be done and stick to those projects.*”

Finally, some interviewees expressed appreciation for being included in the project, and some indicated that they “*admire the effort of the project.*” Additional and more specific strengths are identified within subsequent sections of this report.

There were, of course, areas that were identified for improvement. While numerous suggestions were offered, reoccurring themes included:

- **Communicate more and become easier for local governments to work with.** Partners suggested, “*There could be outreach efforts with the cities and counties. Talk to elected officials at a variety of venues. Other people besides Deb and Warren should be delivering important messages—such as the bureau chiefs and other division people.*” Other partners pointed out, “*There is no good on-going forum for KDOT to interact with local governments. There is a need for routine opportunities for feedback as part of the final audit for project and integrate feedback into project. Not just ‘they didn’t say anything so it must be ok.’*” Navigating through KDOT and its processes is also difficult as interviewees highlighted, “*The challenge is finding the right person to make the decision. It would be hard for someone not familiar with KDOT to know who to call or how to find them.*” Another remarked, “*It is hard to remember the process for each type of project, especially when you don’t do a lot of them. There needs to be easy to understand information to follow...*” One easily addressed suggestion that was made several times – provide KDOT phone books to local partners or make them available on the website. One interviewee indicated that his 2001 KDOT phonebook was “*as valuable as gold.*”
- **The Bureau of Local Projects needs attention.** Overall, interviewees rated their interactions with KDOT highly, mostly in the seven to nine range (with 10 being the BEST). The notable exception is the Bureau of Local Projects that generally received ratings in the 2 – 6 range. Interviewees indicated that issues of concern include: very slow review times, the unwillingness or inability to provide guidance on how to move a project through the KDOT or NEPA process, and less competent professionals in this group as compared to other KDOT groups. It should be noted, however, that Local Projects provides an important function. From the perspective of a local government partner, “*[We work with the] Bureau of Local Projects to get funding.... Local projects does a very good job...*”
- **KDOT needs to continue to move beyond their traditional centralized, highway mentality.** Several interviewees noted the importance of expanding dialogues with multi-modal providers and support for multi-modal activities whether that means moving goods or people. Multi-modal connectors between rail and trucking need to continue to receive attention as do transit providers in both urban and rural areas. One stakeholder suggested “*a new Assistant Secretary position be created*” to increase the importance of multi-modal issues. He explained, “*The model has to be recast. Instead of always talking about new highways to handle traffic, we ought to also be looking at how we might get cars off the road.*” He emphasized the importance of intermodal connectors to enhance efficient movement of freight. The level of Assistant Secretary is needed “*for protection of the role and to make sure the multi-modal voice is heard.*” The relationships between Metropolitan Planning Organizations and KDOT need to evolve because, “*though the*

state does make projects happen, there needs to be adequate coordination because... MPO's are going to do the work.” Finally, one transportation leader noted, “[KDOT is] coming around on public involvement, but they still put a low value on environmental clearance.... Rather than looking at a full range of alternatives, [they clear a line].”

- **Inconsistencies within bureaus and between bureaus exist**, and these inconsistencies in plan requirements and reviews are expensive, confusing, and very frustrating. One interviewee indicated, *“Local Projects changes some thing then construction changes it back. The errors are costly.”*
- **Continue to emphasize partnering.** Some interviewees indicated that partnering activities don't seem to have been as important in recent years as they were previously in the Division of Operations, and those opportunities are more important than ever with decreased funding for the program. Across the board, partners encouraged KDOT to *“continue to have decision makers at the table”* and at the same time make sure project managers and other professionals involved in day-to-day work are active in partnering programs.

Section 1: INTRODUCTION

As part of the KDOT Partnership Project, members of the ETC Team conducted one-on-one interviews with key external stakeholders to gather information on issues and concerns regarding KDOT and how the agency interacts with its external partners. Interviews were conducted face-to-face during June and July, 2003. A standard set of questions were asked, and an example form is provided in Appendix A. Questions and responses are detailed in Sections 2 through 11.

1.1 Participants

KDOT identified 24 key partners across the state to be interviewed. These people were selected based on their depth of experience in working with KDOT as well as to ensure broad geographic interests and varied perspectives were represented. In total, 21 stakeholders were interviewed in person and three stakeholders were interviewed by telephone. Senior leaders from each of the following organizations were interviewed:

- **Government Partners**
 - Federal Highway Administration
 - Miami County
 - City of Newton
 - Wichita-Sedgwick County MPO
 - Kansas Turnpike Authority
 - City of Lenexa
 - Seward County
- **Transportation Providers**
 - WATCO Companies
 - Yellow Corporation
 - A central Kansas regional airport
 - A rural Kansas transit provider
- **Contractors, Suppliers, and Consultants**
 - Ritchie Company
 - King Construction
 - A Disadvantaged Business Enterprise
 - Kansas Aggregate Producers
 - Finney and Turnispeed
 - Olsson Associates
 - Professional organization representative
 - Heavy Constructors of Greater Kansas City
- **Other**
 - Former employees
 - Economic Lifelines
 - Garden City Telegram

1.2 Continuing Communication

It should be noted that everyone interviewed indicated they would like to continue to receive information regarding the KDOT Partnership Project. Most preferred email as the main form of communication, but a few asked that information be provided via regular mail. Those preferences have been forwarded to the Partnership Workgroup so that interviewees will continue to receive information about the project in the most convenient form. While one interviewee pointed out, “*KDOT needs to keep the Office of Public Transportation informed about everything KDOT tells me*” that comment applies to the agency as a whole.

Section 2: INTERACTIONS WITH SPECIFIC KDOT GROUPS

Interviewees were asked “With whom do you work in KDOT (bureaus/sections) and for what purpose?” Responses were based on the type of contact that each individual had with KDOT. Some had specific contact limited to one bureau or person, while others had a very broad perspective, depending upon their jobs. For example, City and County engineers in small communities had wide spread contact with a variety of bureaus and sections. Contractors had more contacts with the different Districts and the areas within those districts rather than contacts through Headquarters. Others had direct contact through the executive levels.

As a follow-up question, interviewees were asked to rate their interaction with the group(s) they identified using a scale of 1-10 where 10 is BEST. Responses and ratings are provided below. To help the reader in reviewing this report, applicable information gathered from other questions during the interviews has been included in the summaries below.

2.1 Overall Ratings – Consistency with Understanding

Overall, interviewees rated their interactions with KDOT highly, mostly in the seven to nine range. In general, interviewees found KDOT groups to be easy to work with and enjoy the professional relationships that have developed over time. For example, one contractor said, “*Most of KDOT would get about an 8 because of the ease of the relationships and that there is no hesitation on my part, or KDOT’s, to pick up the phone when need be.*” Other general comments included:

- Rate KDOT an 8, mostly because of relationships developed over time.
- Developed good relationships.
- All areas, with the exception of Local Projects rates a 7, 8, 9, or 10.
- Most sections are easy to work with; they follow up on communications and are open and honest. The district isn’t as forthcoming as they could be; they are more open at the area level.

2.2 Ratings at the KDOT Executive Level

Stakeholders who work closely with the KDOT Secretary’s office rated their interactions highly, in the 9 – 10 range. The majority of the interviewees indicated that they expect communication to become more open under the leadership of KDOT Secretary Deb Miller. Notably, the expression, “*a breath of fresh air*” was mentioned three times during the interviews regarding the appointment of Secretary Miller.

The Assistant Secretary and State Transportation Engineer Warren Sick also received high marks for the interactions he has had with key transportation stakeholders. For example, one interviewee commented, “*Warren and or Steve Woolington rate a 9—they are responsive and willing to work. Sincere. Action is taken after meetings with them,*” while another government partner noted, “*Warren’s influence on the job helped set the tone and get things on the right track.*” Finally, the Office of Engineering Support was rated an 8 – 10 for 75 percent of their services with the note that some personnel difficulties exist.

2.3 Ratings for Groups under the Division of Operations

One interviewee with more than 30 years experience of working with KDOT provided a summary of his observations of the Division of Operations. *“Construction rates a 6. They are fine to work with, but they are hurt. District Engineers are good, but it falls off technically (i.e., technical expertise below that level needs to be improved). The turnover is too high so there is not enough experience, especially with bridges. The top people are good, but lower level needs experience. People need to advance through the system with good pay and stay in the field (like Mike Crow). I don’t blame them; they leave the field to go to Headquarters where the pay is better. The contractors hate the delays in the decisions, but love the quick pay.”*

Districts/Area Offices

Interviewees with experience interacting with District and area offices offered two general notes: 1) they highlighted the importance of the District Engineer and how his personality and style influence the District’s interactions and 2) the Districts are generally becoming more approachable and responsive. As one construction partner said, *“Areas and Districts get an 8-9. They are interested in hearing the contractor’s perspective. They take our advice and suggestions and implement many of them. They take us seriously because we don’t call all the time and we don’t complain.”* Comments about specific Districts are combined from responses received throughout the interviews.

District 1

- District 1 is too close to Topeka. They are afraid to make a decision without having a huge meeting (i.e. have to have too many KDOT Headquarters staff/managers in meetings).
- District 1 approachability – has problems.
- I found District 1 to be approachable.
- Mick (Halter) is very approachable. He’s a good advocate for us. He’s got common sense and is practical.

District 2

- District 2 is difficult. With contractors, it is the joke that if you have to deal with D2, you need to add 10 percent to your bid.
- District 2 is growing worse in terms of decision-making.
- District 2 approachability – good.

District 3

- District 3 has a new technician so it is much better.
- District 3 approachability – no complaints.
- District 3 – not approachable.

District 4

- District 4 is better now with the new DE.
- District 4 – terrible (in terms of responsiveness).
- District 4 approachability - has problems.
- District 4 approachability – the worst.

District 5

- District 5 is good to work with—just a phone call away.
- District 5 is good to work with.
- District 5 – really good (in terms of responsiveness) – 2 responses
- District 5 approachability – good.

District 6

- Larry Thompson is very accessible and open with me.
- District 6 is fairly good (in terms of responsiveness).
- District 6 approachability – good (2 responses).

Bureau of Construction and Maintenance

- I'd rate them an 8.
- They have the old hierarchy and have to run lots (of information requests) up the flagpole to get approval before they can answer.

Bureau of Materials and Research

- Materials and Research is about a 7. They attend meetings, but there is not a great sense of partnering. They seem to ignore the fact that material suppliers can provide a variety of materials—they [suppliers] need input earlier on what is needed so they can figure out what best to provide.
- Materials is a 10. They are very supportive and helpful. Very good personnel.

2.4 Ratings for Groups under the Division of Planning

Several partners recognized the importance of placing more emphasis on transportation planning and giving more consideration to multi-modal transportation. One stakeholder pointedly said, “[KDOT needs to provide] better communication upfront with planners so that they don't have to play catch up all the time.” Another partner commented, “It's an engineer to engineer culture. Under (Secretary) Carlson, planners played second fiddle to engineers. KDOT engineers call city engineers who then call Planning [instead of calling Planning directly]”. While there were compliments for the more technical side of Transportation Planning (e.g., Kris Herrick's group for modeling), one partner expressed concern about KDOT's “taking on an additional [greater] role” in terms of thinking that KDOT has approval authority rather than a “coordinating” or “cooperating” role regarding local decisions.

Bureau of Transportation Planning - MPO Administration

- KDOT has to act differently with counties with MPOs because the MPO's can make decisions. Though the state does make projects happen, there needs to be adequate coordination—because if the state does make the decision and the MPO's are going to do the work—communication needs to happen earlier.
- KDOT is taking on more authority than it should in terms of MPOs and approvals for documents prepared by the MPOs. Three or four years ago, KDOT established an MPO Joint Planning Agreement. It's not an agreement... it's all one sided. They [KDOT] put out another one this April creating authority for themselves again.

Office of Public Transportation

This group was rated an 8 – 9 because they do a good job of facilitating the distribution of Federal funds and “*are willing to meet with me in Topeka whenever I want. They have time for me.*” However, it was noted that they could improve communication and are inflexible at times about the process for allocating funds.

Bureau of Traffic Safety

- Good—we have weekly communications and good attention.
- We are always concerned with safety... It is an important issue. KDOT does a great job with limited resources.
- I would rate them a 9. All of our interaction has been good, but it is very limited.
- I would rate them an 8. We aren’t doing as much (especially with seat belts as we could) off the state system.... Can’t ignore 50 percent of the system... [either KDOT] doesn’t want to infringe on locals or doesn’t feel responsible.

Bureau of Program Management

- They rate a 10 in terms of responsiveness. They are very willing to give the story behind the numbers.
- Rosie is great. While [the System Enhancement] process is difficult, we got a fair shake.

2.5 Ratings for Groups under the Division of Engineering and Design**Bureau of Local Projects**

The Bureau of Local Projects received the lowest ratings of all KDOT groups, in the 2 – 6 range. Interviewees indicated that issues of concern include: very slow review times, the unwillingness or inability to provide guidance on how to move a project through the KDOT process, and less competent professionals in this group as compared to other KDOT groups. Concern about this Bureau is widespread, as one stakeholder commented, “*KCEC and APWA have made their number one priority in the partnering effort scheduling issues... that is really to combat the slowness of Local Projects without being so blunt.*” As noted in the Executive Summary, however, there was one exception to the otherwise negative comments, “... *Local Projects does a very good job... Larry Emig has always been responsive...*”. Other specific comments included:

- Local Projects is the exception to KDOT’s high marks. They rate a 2 because they are slow. Too many people have to review information and everything must go through one person. Through my involvement with other organizations, other communities feel the same way.
- Local Projects rates a 6.
- Local Projects takes a long time to respond. One person has to review everything. [No trust in staff] and there is no push for deadlines.
- Local Projects rates a 5. Local governments asking for guidance and interpretation, but it is hard to get answers to your questions. They are not tuned into the NEPA process. For example, if you want to talk about a project in the early stages, they will say, “*if you don’t have a project number, then I can’t talk to you about this project.*”
- I would give Local Projects a 6—they are slower and less responsive.

- I would rate them a 5. The review of contracts is not timely. There are strong personalities, which make it rough.
- The attitude of a staff person is “*here’s what we’re going to do—what do you think?*” Early give and take is important for no surprises. That group has lots of surprises.
- I rate Local Projects a 5. The personnel is the hang-up—not enough guidance for younger staff—contracts are ridiculously slow. Ron Seitz has been helpful, but not the greatest personnel as a bureau.
- There is a presentation where a staff person talks about the process for projects and he has a slide with 30 boxes—it needs to be redone. It is too cluttered and can’t be read and is confusing. The process looks so bad that no one wants to start it.
- No good technical oversight. Local Projects need a Jim Brewer or Bob Hirt for guidance. [There is] management not really design or construction. Ron Sietz will give some technical oversight, but more might be needed. There is an inter-relationship between specs, plans, and special provisions, especially with Local Projects. Estimators can do a better job when their work is in sequence. When Local Projects changes the sequence, then the estimators make mistakes. Construction should be a key player for Local Projects. Finally, there are lots of scheduling lapses with Local Projects. Sometimes cities and counties could accelerate projects if Local Projects could accelerate – they are not responsive to cities and counties.
- Field checks are sometimes superficial rather than detailed. Sometimes they [the checks] are conducted from an office instead of in the field.
- Suggestions to improve Local Projects included putting the Bureau under different control in the organization or have leadership execute more control.

Coordinating

- While I don’t work real closely with Al Cathcart, I’d rate his group a 10. He followed up and called me after a meeting that I missed to make sure I got the information.

Bureau of Design

Generally, the Bureau of Design received high ratings, particularly in terms of their professionalism and knowledge. Representative comments include:

- Design is responsive and rates about a 7-8.
- They have lost a lot of people at the top recently and that has hurt them a bit.
- Very impressed with the bridge group. Rate them an 8-9.
- Dick Elliot, Gary Conn are great senior squad leaders. Steve King is better on the road side. Jim Brewer is very good in meetings with the public.
- I’d give them about a 6 because they are so personality driven. Some are great [at providing information] and with some [it’s] like pulling teeth. Steve Rockers, Scott King, and Rod Lacey are good, but others dance around the edges.

However, several interviewees noted that inconsistencies within the Bureau and between the Bureau of Design and other Bureaus exist and that these inconsistencies are expensive, confusing, and very frustrating. Please see Section 3.2 The Worst Aspects of Working with KDOT and Section 10.3 Cost Saving Measures for Division of Engineering for additional information. It was also noted that, “*Checkers for constructions plans with a little experience would be good.*”

Audits

- They are very supportive. The audits are good and fair and the people are pleasant to work with.
- While auditing is fine, it takes forever to close out a job. There has been some outsourcing of audits and there may be communication problems with the outside firms asking for personal income tax returns, which seems very inappropriate to me.

2.6 Ratings for Groups under the Division of Public Affairs**Bureau of Public Information**

- For Public Information, I deal mostly with Headquarters staff because of the open records act and all the information is central. For routine calls or for local information, I will call the district. I would rate Headquarters as a 7-8 and the Districts as a 8-9. They are pretty responsive under new leadership.

2.7 Division of Aviation

This division received a rating of 9 with mostly positive responses to all questions. As one interviewee said, *“They have a quality staff and the director is responsive to our issues and concerns.”* One suggestion for improvement was earlier communication about expansion or changes in the highway system. As this partner pointed out, *“Sometimes road changes impact airports and we should receive that information so that we will understand what major changes are coming so that we can reconfigure our schedule.”* He was referencing changes that would occur in the mid-term not just the next year and changes that extend beyond just adjoining properties. For example, an upgraded highway or improved access might be important to inter-modal freight shippers.

Section 3: THE BEST AND WORST ASPECTS OF WORKING WITH KDOT

Interviewees were asked to identify the two or three things that they liked best about working with KDOT and the two or three things that they liked least (or found most frustrating) about working with KDOT. Those responses are provided below.

3.1 The Best Aspects of Working with KDOT

Clearly, employees are KDOT's most important asset. As one partner highlighted, "*The people are very dedicated and sharp. They care about serving the public with little pay. They believe and try to live the mission statement.*" Other aspects that key transportation partners consider to be "best" include the relationships developed with employees over time, improving communication, an increasing emphasis on multi-modal and planning functions, and the income that KDOT projects provide. Representative comments include:

Knowledgeable, professional, helpful staff

- People are friendly and helpful to work with. There is access to people and they call you back. The technical people are very good. They share information and make sure we are all on the right track.
- They are very helpful to me—I look to KDOT for support.
- The access that we have to staff.
- They have a great knowledge base.
- Knowledgeable staff.
- They are professional—there are no inappropriate activities.
- The good, intelligent people. They are really trying the best for the state.
- Safety is a major initiative and the people at KDOT have been working hard with us.
- There are exceptional people in leadership—Deb Miller, Rosie Ingram, Warren Sick, Mick Halter, Roy Rissky.
- There is some risk-taking. For example, Materials was willing to try Superpaves, which was a major undertaking on the part of Lon Ingram.
- They are top-notch in terms of design standards. They have great people and top of the line equipment.
- Sometimes I use KDOT as a buffer; there is something to be said for that. I appreciate KDOT saying "*it's ok to blame it on us.*" When you are right, it's not always popular. I appreciate that.

Professional relationships that develop over time

- Enjoy the relationships.
- Personal relationships.
- Collaboration/cooperation.
- KDOT treats us fairly. Payment is prompt and let us help solve problems.
- Partnering between KCE and KDOT pretty successful.
- There is a need for partnering—need to sit down quarterly. It's [our partnering effort] the envy of many states.

Improving communication

- The expediency—when I call with inquiry, we get a response. We might not like the answer, but they are very forthcoming with information and seem genuinely interested in answering questions now.
- Overall communication and efficiency are pretty good.
- KDOT understands its mission (to provide a safe and efficient transportation system) and is open to public input in the development of plans and implementation of projects.

Increasing emphasis on multi-modal and planning functions

- Chris Huffman –Corridor Management Section has brought the thinking along within KDOT—that corridor preservation is an important approach.
- Past 6-8 years KDOT has had more recognition for multimodal connections. Especially between highways, airports, and rail for overall transportation.
- Concerns have grown beyond just roads to overall needs in urban and rural areas.

Income that KDOT projects provide

- Two interviewees indicated that they appreciate the work that KDOT provides, and especially like the quick payment of invoices.

3.2 The Worst Aspects of Working with KDOT

Interviewees were asked to identify the two or three things they like least about working with KDOT or that they find frustrating about working with KDOT. Comments fell generally into the following categories: the culture is rigid, inconsistencies exist within or between groups, KDOT is not easy to work with (from other government perspectives), KDOT is not easy to work with (from the contractor/supplier perspective), not enough emphasis on multi-modal issues.

Rigid Culture

- ... there is a built in rigidity, but it is the culture, which is sometimes a challenge,
- Two partners mentioned KDOT's willingness to accept regulations as frustrating. As one interviewee pointed out, "*[There is the] expectation that regulations are the way they should be.*" While the other partner mentioned, "*[There are] excessive regulations, though some are federal, but not all the regulations are required. It just seems that they (KDOT) have gotten in the habit of using them, but there could be more control over them.*"
- Heavy on engineering. The glass is always half empty and they want their facts in triplicate.
- They put a low value on environmental clearance. Design always takes precedent over environmental.
- [There is] still bureaucratic thinking – defensiveness where it isn't needed.
- [I don't like the] hierarchy and lack of freedom for people lower on the chain to respond to questions.
- More than one stakeholder indicated that there is an inclination at KDOT to respond to questions with "*it's always done this way*" or "*our hands are tied*" which isn't really an answer.

Inconsistencies Within or Between Groups

- There is sometimes inconsistent review of information and unpredictable about how things get approved between Local Projects and Design.
- Lack of consistency—between Local Projects and Design, process for handling contracts and review.
- Three interviewees noted that inconsistent requirements between Squad Leaders is very frustrating and it can be quite expensive to respond to those preferences. Said one partner, *“Squad Leaders vary on things like using abbreviations.”* Another pointed out, *“[Squad Leaders require] minor plan changes, which are matters of opinion. They change things because they can.”* And finally, another partner commented, *“There is inconsistency between the road squad leaders, but you don’t see as many inconsistencies in the bridge group.”*

KDOT is Not Easy to Work With (from other government perspectives)

- Because of political aspects, local government works best when there is some “wiggle room.” Sometimes having the State as a go-between can be stifling. It’s hard to know – sometimes we get easy approvals and sometimes [KDOT] sits on it or will require a tough review which causes delays.
- It is hard to remember the process for each type of project, especially when you don’t do a lot of them. There needs to be easy to understand information to follow, or someone to call to answer questions. Something with dates on it to know the deadlines for things. Use less jargon, even with the City Engineers. What is a form 883?
- There are only 30 County Engineers out of 105 Counties. Other counties don’t get information on field checks and other information because KDOT doesn’t know who to send the information to. It doesn’t have to go to an engineer; the county just needs to be informed of what is going on in the area.
- They don’t speak in layman’s terms, not everyone understands KDOT lingo.
- There are sometimes hidden hoops that you have to jump through on projects. You didn’t know that there was a procedure to be followed, then all of a sudden you are being told that you have to do it like this. *“This is the way we’ve always done it”* is not an acceptable answer. KDOT needs to be able to explain the why’s behind decisions or rationale.
- We would be willing to pay per sheet for conversion software or part of software package (so that plans could be delivered in AutoCAD instead of MicroStation).
- KDOT doesn’t hold the consultants who work on projects accountable for poor work on our projects that are facilitated by KDOT for local communities.

KDOT is Not Easy to Work With (from the contractor/supplier perspective)

- Specifications assume equal performance from all contractors when that is not always the case.
- Bidding policy decreases margins for profit. Maybe the A+/B bidding would be a better way of doing it.
- Better coordination with utilities to identify local lines before projects begin.
- KDOT people on the job do not know their own specifications. Lack of experience with young staff that don’t know the job well. They do not use common sense and are too rigid. If it’s not in the specifications book then you can’t do it, attitude.
- Penalties not commensurate with bonuses.

- Contract inspectors are not as qualified and are more inefficient than KDOT inspectors.
- Need to look at industry trends and technical specifications.
- Sometimes KDOT relies too much on scientific research rather than making sure the specification policy has taken economic factors into consideration. Policies should be at least neutral—don't write Kansas producers out of ability to provide product. Later in the interview, the point was brought up again when this interviewee highlighted that other states (especially Colorado and Ohio) tend to take economics into consideration in spec policies. He posed the question, "*Are we supporting Kansas businesses?*"

Not Enough Emphasis on Multi-Modal Issues

- It is a truck culture. There is not advocacy for non-asphalt modes of transportation. KDOT needs a Multimodal section—an Assistant Secretary to identify greater transportation efficiencies by using other modes.
- We may be missing an opportunity. The Secretary's Office should open a dialog regarding trucking.
- The lack of intermodal connections should be reviewed.

Section 4: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE TRENDS AT KDOT

Interviewees were asked if they have noticed any positive or negative trends developing at KDOT in the last couple of years. Several interviewees noted that the recent change in leadership would likely influence trends that had been developing. Their responses are noted below.

4.1 Positive Trends at KDOT

The most frequently mentioned positive trend is that communication is improving, and most expect that trend to continue under the leadership of Secretary Miller. Other comments were also offered and are provided below.

Communication is improving

- Open house style meeting, very positive.
- Open atmosphere for dialog and input.
- Better at sending out information.
- More effort to work with outside groups.
- Making an effort to become more involved at a community and local level and seek input.
- Openness of communication and customer service with Deb and Warren.
- New administration is much more open and is a '*breath of fresh air*' compared to old administration that was autocratic when dealing with the public. New policy is good for Kansas.
- Deb is a breath of fresh air for employees.
- Now KDOT is doing a fine job. Got rid of general council. Continue the path that you are on.
- KDOT is coming around on public involvement.... (it is) a bit better.

Other positive trends

- Development of multimodal plan and communicated it to stakeholders.
- Getting rid of the metric system. It was so expensive.

4.2 Negative Trends Developing at KDOT

A couple of interviewees expressed concern about the trend to use more contract inspectors rather than KDOT employees. A few interviewees also expressed concern that KDOT employees don't always think for themselves rather they blindly accept standards or regulations; however, there were no overriding themes about negative trends. Specific comments included:

Contract inspectors

- Construction observations/ inspections have gone downhill. Maybe it will cycle up again. More certifications than inspection.
- KDOT doing less work themselves (surveying, testing, inspections) which has created a disconnect with the work going on in the field. Losing touch because they are not as close to projects as they used to be.

Think for themselves rather than blindly accepting standards/regulations

- Not willing to take risks—to improve quality it requires some experimentation and risk taking.
- KDOT needs to look at how to make something work, not just follow the specifications. Use them as a guideline, but not the bible.

Other negative trends

- Lack of maintenance money.
- While there is an increased emphasis on quality, adversarial relationships are also on the rise between KDOT and contractors.
- Changes are difficult and challenging. Any attempt at changing the culture really only results in minor shifts because it is so ingrained.
- Increased defensiveness in the last 3 to 4 years is a bit of a negative trend. It's not good for the agency. Being responsive is a pain in the butt, but you have to do it.
- Dean (former Secretary Carlson) had gotten pretty confrontational so it was KDOT vs. the world, KDOT vs. the legislature, KDOT vs. the public, and KDOT vs. other agencies. That is probably changing under Deb (Secretary Miller).
- Lack of ability to motivate/give incentives to good employees. It is hard to keep people invigorated. The engineering bonuses were well intentioned but might have backfired. Another partner indicated that KDOT should pay its good people more to keep them as there is too much turnover.
- I feel KDOT has been forcing the 'preferred' plan for projects down our throat. They [KDOT] selected the most expensive option but it wasn't necessarily our preference... don't really need a freeway. KDOT can do a lot of other work for \$21 million.

Section 5: COMPARING KDOT TO OTHER GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Interviewees were asked to compare KDOT to other governmental organizations with which they work. While some interviewees indicated that they couldn't think of other organizations to use for comparison purposes, of those who could make a comparison, most indicated that KDOT is better to work with than other governmental organizations. For example, one stakeholder noted, "[KDOT is] better trained, equipped and funded [than many other state DOTs]. They are well prepared for meetings, know the regs and do their homework...". Another partner noted, "[KDOT has] high credibility compared to other agencies like MoDOT. They [KDOT] uphold their values." Additional responses are provided below:

5.1 Positive Comments / KDOT is Better to Work with than Other Organizations

Again, employees were cited as a primary reason for positive comparisons. Representative remarks included:

Employees

- Technical side of KDOT is fantastic. Design is very influential.
- KDOT is responsive, is very competent.
- Overall they have enough staff with expertise.
- I like the longevity over time (not much turnover). There is lots of money over a long time frame.
- KDOT staff is very strong.
- The issues and the people are a big part of it. FHWA is difficult. Ron Seitz has been an excellent advocate (for our local project).
- KDOT is generally better than other DOTs I've worked with.

Fulfill their mission well/do their work well

- They maintain their system well.
- KDOT pays regularly and on time. In fact, contractors raised this point several times and noted that, "*KDOT is the best about paying on time*" (as compared to cities and counties), and that fact is much appreciated.
- Other agencies have more rigidity.
- KDOT does a much better job tracking budgets than Department of Revenue.
- Communications are better at KDOT than at other agencies.
- KDOT is better compared to the railroads and USACE, EPA and other DOTs. KDOT lets the engineers run what they should be doing.
- There are not so many differences between districts (as there used to be).

Miscellaneous

- KDOT is more responsive and has a better understanding of industry than other government offices—KDHE or Water Resources.
- [KDOT is] more accessible than, say, Revenue or Water Resources.
- [KDOT was] wise to recognize the importance of Economic Lifelines... One of the reasons this program is so strong... They were able to harness it.

5.2 Neutral Comments / KDOT is About the Same to Work with as Other Organizations

- Good talented people, no better than other similar agencies.

5.3 Negative Comments / KDOT is Worse to Work with than Other Organizations

- I would rather work with the smaller organization. More gets done with fewer steps and a simpler process. Rather work with city than the county than the state than the federal government.
- Designers need more exposure in the field.

5.4 Other Good Examples

- Other states have good models—Iowa provides a bridge design manual and software. Missouri had a good three-day bridge inspection class that showed pictures and then went out to look at the bridges—better than just computer based classes.
- Iowa has a decent environmental program. They don't bury their environmental process or pick an alignment before doing an environmental process. They have brought environmental earlier into the process. Constituents are becoming more savvy. Deb (Secretary Miller) is attuned to that, Warren is flexible, Comstock is getting better but there is a problem [with a staff member in design]. Perhaps establishing an environmental section would help.

Section 6: RATING THE RESPONSIVENESS OF KDOT

In response to the question, “Do you generally think KDOT is responsive to your organization? Receive information in a timely fashion? Do you think decisions are made in a timely fashion? And why?” most interviewees indicated that they find KDOT to be responsive or very responsive, but there were some notable exceptions. Representative comments are provided below:

Responsive

Most interviewees indicated that they find KDOT to be responsive; however, a few people pointed out that they enjoy a higher level of responsiveness because their organization carries enough clout to get responses quickly or their personal relationships help them get things done. The internet was credited with enhancing responsiveness, particularly when engineering standards were made available electronically.

Generally responsive

Three interviewees indicated that they find KDOT to be generally responsive. As one person pointed out, *“It’s an engineering culture. It isn’t empathetic to people who do not understand the KDOT way or transportation. They don’t really try to understand the other point of view and people are less trusting than they were 20 years ago. KDOT really needs to get to the heart of the problem and understand it (i.e. understand the problem from the other person’s perspective).”* While another stakeholder commented, *“KDOT is reasonably timely with information”* and yet another offered, *“meets expectations for a state agency.”*

Not responsive

A couple of groups of stakeholders indicated that KDOT is not responsive to their concerns. Comments from the contractors and consultants perspectives included that KDOT is not responsive to subcontractors and *“Partnering is a good idea, but it is slanted toward the prime contractor. Not a lot of teamwork or collaboration going on. Lots of the Prime contractors are bullies,”* and KDOT will not intervene on behalf of subcontractors. The relationship between the inspectors and LPAs was labeled *“difficult.”* That person noted that *“there is conflict with KDOT inspectors and the LPAs.”*

A couple of comments were also received from the government partners’ perspective. As one partner noted, *“Generally it takes a long time to get an answer. Too many people have to give input (i.e., it takes too many people to weigh in on a decision at KDOT). What KDOT doesn’t understand is that local citizens hold the city accountable and KDOT doesn’t find that important. No one understands KDOT’s involvement.”* Frustration was also expressed in the form of this comment, *“The K-10 corridor study contract has not been signed, that is unacceptable. There was excitement around the project, but now it has been months and it is so slow.”*

Section 7: DECISION MAKING AT KDOT

Most transportation partners think the decision-making process at KDOT works reasonably well, but again there were a few notable exceptions. Two aspects of decision making were discussed: 1) are decisions made consistently and upheld and 2) are decisions made at the right level.

7.1 Consistency of Decisions

Many comments involved decisions that are made in the field; however, there were comments on other aspects of decision making. Some interviewees recognized that it is not possible for all decisions to be consistent. Representative comments are provided below:

Decisions are Made Consistently and Upheld

Most interviewees indicated that decisions are made consistently and are upheld. As one partner noted, *“It is the beast of construction that decisions are changed or overridden for the contractors. It also depends on who’s making decisions. Sometimes they are too reluctant to assess penalties because they are afraid of the legal/political implications. [After you go beyond the incentive portion of the project, and reach the disincentives part]... then the contractors get sloppy. It puts the inspectors in a bad spot, but by and large the state does a good job backing up the inspectors.”* Another stakeholder indicated, *“[There is a] real desire for that (consistency) but sometimes that desire is silly... consistency for consistency’s sake is not the best answer.”* Other comments included:

- Permits are given fairly and consistently.
- KDOT is more willing to accept input is greater than it was in the past. (e.g. input on a road location.)
- I’ve had experience with several (aviation) projects since 1985 and usually the standards are well established and honored.

Decisions are Not Made Consistently and Upheld

- No. Sometimes technicians in the field will make decisions, but later the senior techs or others in District office change it.
- Not necessarily. There doesn’t seem to be any urgency. Inspectors don’t want to be responsible for decisions because they don’t have the knowledge or competency. Too casual about getting things done.
- Decisions vary within time of year and within districts.
- While KDOT doesn’t always uphold decisions, I don’t have “heartburn” because KDOT thinks through the situation before reversing the decision. However, a few actions that have been promised have not come to fruition like allowing lump sum contracts.

7.2 Appropriate Level of Decision Making

Many partners indicated that the appropriate levels seem to be making decisions. As one partner said, *“It appears that people are not going to others for answers so they must be the right decision makers.”* Others had criticism for KDOT in terms of the number of people it takes to make a decision and the need to empower employees at lower levels to make decisions. One partner, who indicated that decisions sometimes are and sometimes are not made at the right levels, commented, *“A lot of decisions could be made at lower levels... but people are afraid of*

mistakes... a better sense is needed as to what needs a policy level decision (like the rumble strip decision where the Secretary over-ruled the decision of Traffic Engineering)."

Positive

Of the ten partners who indicated decisions are made at the right level, one noted, *"All of our issues are larger issues; we don't tend to get to issues where a lower level person could make it."* On a comparative note, another partner offered, the right levels are making decisions *"especially compared to other DOTs."* Finally, one stakeholder commented, *"About 90 percent of the time" decisions are made at the right level. "But sometimes little minor things end up with the Secretary when it is not necessary,"* and you have to avoid the *"politics of intrusion"* where the study or the manual says KDOT should change something but the action really only serves to upset the community. Finally, another partner reported, *"Contractors have good feedback. Things flow as smoothly as you can expect. Decisions are made on a timely basis in the field."*

Negative

Representative comments that indicate decisions could be made at more appropriate levels include:

- Bureau of Design takes on a lot of decisions when planners could do it from the beginning—instead of the designers having them justify it after the fact. Traffic should dictate roads.
- No, not if the technicians in the field are making the wrong decisions and then it is overturned later.
- I would like to see decisions made in the field at the area and subarea levels.—2 responses
- It bewilders me how many people it takes to make a decision. Lower levels should be able to make decisions.
- The challenge is finding the right person to make the decision. It would be hard for someone not familiar with KDOT to know who to call or how to find them.

Section 8: RATING THE APPROACHABILITY OF KDOT

The majority of transportation partners across the state find KDOT staff at the Districts and Headquarters to be approachable or very approachable. A couple of representative quotes include, “*Deb is very approachable. The area engineers are as well,*” and “*[We’re] not told to go away and there is no stonewalling. They try to find the right person to respond.*” Some partners attributed KDOT staff approachability to “*the relationships that I’ve developed over time*” and “*My past personal relationships allow the approachability.*”

However, a few stakeholders indicated they don’t really find staff to be approachable at all. As one person said, “*I don’t know. In some cases the District Engineers have created their own fiefdoms and in the past were not very accepting of visits from HQ and the Secretary. It is part of the culture.*” Another suggested, “*There is some room for improvement... some Area Engineers are a little territorial.*”

Section 9: IMPROVING THE WAY KDOT AND PARTNERS WORK TOGETHER

The question of how KDOT and partners can work better together was asked from two perspectives: 1) how can KDOT improve the way it works with partners, and 2) what are partners willing to do to improve the way they work with KDOT.

9.1 Improving the Way KDOT Works with Partners

Suggestions on how KDOT could improve the way it works with partners fell into the following three broad categories: communicate more and become easier for local governments to work with, improve partnering with contractors/ consultants, and open more dialogues on multi-modal issues. Two stakeholders commented, “*Nothing really, they (KDOT) are approachable.*”

Communicate More and Become Easier for Local Governments to Work With

- One local government partner suggested that each community should have a KDOT contact person (like consultants have one client contact person). That way, if you (a city or county) need to interact with KDOT for any reason, you call your contact person. That person can help you figure out what process you need to follow and who you really need to call for help. This contact person could also follow-up to make sure you (the city or county) are receiving information and decisions in a timely fashion. Another similar idea of a “customer service window” was also suggested.
- Software conversion packages, so that counties and KDOT are able to use the same systems without having to redo so much of the work.
- Support Counties that don’t have a county engineer by going to a model of County Engineer Districts, counties share one County Engineer.
- There could be outreach efforts with the cities and counties. Talk to elected officials at a variety of venues. Other people besides Deb and Warren should be delivering important messages—such as the bureau chiefs and other division people.
- There is no good on-going forum for KDOT to interact with local governments. There is a need for routine opportunities for feedback as part of final audit for project and integrate feedback into project. Not just “they didn’t say anything so it must be ok.”
- Move local projects - put them under the Road Section.
- Do more on the safety side with local governments.... Have safety forums and an established plan – these need to be resurrected.
- KDOT should maximize face-to-face contact with the people they work with and support.

Improve Partnering with Contractors/Consultants

- Procedures and maintaining partnership program. The “parties” for finishing projects are effective, but they are usually at the wrong time and employees are less willing to give their freetime than they used to be. They need to be better thought out and planned during work hours and not months after the project is done at the project location after the crews have moved on.
- There is no partnering with the subcontractors. There is probably a missed opportunity there.
- Include us in partnering events (comment from a supplier). Could be that the attitude is with the contractors and not KDOT.

- For consultants, the interaction is good through KCE Annual Transportation Conference, but don't restrict project managers from participating.
- Partnering Program—continue to have decision makers at the table.
- Partnering should be 100 percent both ways, sometimes it seems like the contractors want 100 percent from KDOT.

Open More Dialogues on Multi-Modal or Transportation Planning Issues

- Involve the MPOs more. Meet once a year with all MPOs and ask for input on the agenda. KDOT has to set the agenda and the information is almost bland (I don't want to watch a highway safety video). They (KDOT) mean well to streamline operations, but there isn't a one size fits all agreement. For example, MARC is a COG (Council of Government), but Wichita is governed by a city council. They (KDOT) need to be flexible for the end user, not have a plan that is flexible for KDOT (i.e., that only meets KDOT's needs).
- Assistant Secretary for multimodal—to champion for greater transportation efficiencies.
- Informal meetings with the Secretary and staff to begin to open the dialog for trucking. KTA has been much more aggressive with the truckers, and KDOT could be missing an opportunity.
- Share your work plan for the year with the Division of Aviation so that they are informed about the upcoming projects.
- Conduct forums on rural transit like (Governor) Graves did in 2000. Subsidies will be needed, but it is important for the elderly.
- Trucking and railroads need to work together to keep short lines alive. Intermodal connectors need attention, though maybe not a lot of money.
- KDOT should look at allowing local transit providers to use a portion of Federal funding for administration. Administrative funding is allocated separately from Operating funding, but the growth of administrative funding has not kept up with the growth in operations funding.

9.2 Improving the Way Partners Work with KDOT

Responses to the question “What is your organization willing to do to improve the way you work with KDOT” generally fell into the following three categories: 1) “*We would do anything we could...*” to 2) “*We feel like we're doing all that we can...*” or 3) a category that could be broadly termed “*partnering.*” It should be noted that there is not unanimous support of formalized partnering. As one key transportation stakeholder said, “*The partnership concept is too touchy-feely. We'd prefer to get work based on how we perform.*” It is important that KDOT balance the emphasis on formalized partnering with those who have referred to it as “*psycho-babble.*” Representative comments regarding partnering are provided below:

- Things have been improving.
- Contractors should have input on writing specifications. Eighty to ninety percent of disagreements occur around poorly written specifications. Sometimes the contractors are called in, but it is usually after a disaster and then it (the spec) needs to be rewritten.
- We consider ourselves a true partner with KDOT. We are financing projects that KDOT wanted. We will mold to fit KDOT's needs.

- I am willing to continue to serve on the Liaison Committee between the County Highway Association and KDOT. I have direct input at the planning level for discussion that affect local governments.
- If KDOT would offer training sessions on process, we'd dedicate staff time to participate.
- Consulting engineers wouldn't mind discussing more accountability for poor performance.
- Conduct more preconstruction conferences. One thing that we did on the Oakland Express Bridge was a preconstruction conference with the steel fabricator and with people in the shop actually doing the shop drawings to clarify issues in advance.

Section 10: COST-SAVING MEASURES

Transportation partners have a variety of ideas about how KDOT might save money, as reported below. However, it should be noted, that many partners indicated that they didn't have any specific ideas at all, or that they think operations are already cost effective. For example, one partner commented, "*Operations are pretty good... [KDOT gets] pretty high marks for their ability to change to conditions on the job site and decision making on construction projects is working.*"

10.1 General Cost-Saving Measures

Partners had the most ideas for general or agency wide cost saving measures, including the following comments:

- It's a bureaucracy—it is generously staffed.
- Too many state employees driving state vehicles alone. People need to share trips to job sites.
- They've already done it. Metric system was a disaster and was very expensive.
- Try to take 1,000 miles off of highway system.
- Provide more information on your website.
- It bewilders me how many people it takes to make a decision... to even sign for a construction change. Look at the number of signatures required on all forms. You (KDOT) could save a lot of money by streamlining the approval and decision-making process. Again, look at the number of signatures required.
- Maybe look out beyond 20-year horizon.
- Need to be able to deal with under performers. Give supervisors more latitude to deal with the personnel issues.

10.2 Cost-Saving Ideas for Division of Operations

Second to general ideas, partners had several ideas for how the Division of Operations might save money. Those ideas included:

- Bureau of Materials Research. One partner suggested that the Bureau use a different form of lifecycle cost analysis as he thinks the Bureau doesn't always used the best approach. They use an acceptable approach, but it doesn't always take into consideration the most up to date data or advanced technologies. There is no data on new materials. Another question posed by a partner was whether a Bureau of Materials Research is needed. He suggested that their activities could be placed in the Construction and Design and maybe those activities would be better coordinated with just a small materials research lab. He indicated that many DOTs are organized that way. Another stakeholder suggested that KDOT could perhaps more fully utilize the K-State Accelerated Pavement Test facility.
- Change from six districts to three districts, there is better technology now that would provide more efficiencies.
- Too many field engineers. Headquarters should do more of the work.
- Construction management types would be better in the field.

- Too many levels in the field.
- Contract out some of the items KDOT tries to do internally. Sixteen guys were doing small crack sealing jobs – an excessive use of labor and equipment.

10.3 Cost-Saving Ideas for Division of Engineering

Most of these comments focus on the cost of revising plans and addressing comments due to inconsistencies within the Bureau of Design or between bureaus with the Division of Engineering. Partners reiterated comments that they had made previously in the interview, citing squad leaders who have plans changed because of personal preferences about abbreviations or who want to change inconsequential information because they can. Other specific comments included:

- Consistency in review will help with cost savings for the consultants and ultimately the state. There is inconsistency between departments. Local Projects changes something then construction changes it back. The errors are costly.
- Design requires lots of notes to be written even when specifications are already there. Don't need so many notes.
- Many wasteful acts are mandated by the federal government. Use specifications that make sense for the area and the project. Using the same specs for guard rails in western Kansas as in an urban area, doesn't make the most sense and it's expensive.
- Scale back on some of the projects being designed. We don't always need a freeway and interchanges add millions to projects. Expressways are OK.

10.4 Cost-Saving Ideas for Traffic Safety and Transportation Information

- A suggestion was offered that perhaps KDOT could get a “bigger bang” for their buck if some of the funding for Traffic Safety was merged with or managed by Transportation Information instead of hiring consultants to oversee contracts. Also, Traffic Safety could/should manage work zone safety.
- Another idea is to put Support Services (or part of Support Services) under Transportation Information.
- It was also suggested that if Transportation Information was expanded or took on new responsibilities, that a day-to-day manager for an expanded communications group would be needed. As one partner noted, *“the Public Affairs Director is too busy when the Legislature is in session to manage a communications group.”*

10.5 Cost –Saving ideas for Other Governments

Partners also identified ways that KDOT could help local governments save money. Those ideas included:

- Identify administrative costs early in the project, so that the city does not get a bill years after the conclusion of the project for extra expenses. It has happened a few times with invoices coming in years later with expenses exceeding \$100,000.

- Improve the basis of contracts from working day to fixed day contracts so that cities don't end up having to pay more than they have allocated for the project. Provide better incentive/disincentive programs.

Section 11: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

While many interviewees indicated that they had covered their concerns and issues through previously asked questions, several stakeholders had additional comments or wanted to emphasize a particular point. The following information includes direct responses to the question, “Do you have any additional comments?” as well as summarizing issues and concerns that were raised throughout the interviews and needed to be brought together as a cohesive topic somewhere in this report.

Phone books

- The phone books are great, need to be updated and provided more.

Funding

- Kansas Legislature not able to stay committed to plan for overall transportation needs.
- Excellent job trying to hold CTP together.
- Partnering program had been enhanced over the past 8-9 years, it is a much bigger program. But the partnering program has flattened in the past 2 years—we need more sharing of information so that we can work together on funding issues. Rosie is always available, so are Warren and Dave Comstock.
- Not seeing enough media about achieving successes under CTP –stakeholders need to know what is being completed. The economic downturn would be much worse if we hadn’t invested in our infrastructure over the last decade.
- Need to work with Economic Lifelines and other ancillary groups to develop support for funding and other issues.
- Highway funding needs a champion—funding needs to be consistent, predictable, and unyankable.
- [KDOT] might want to rethink innovative finance for the out years of their program.
- KDOT could improve the way it works with its partners by holding more frequent meetings with partners on an annual basis around the State – prior to coming out each year with a published program. [KDOT could/should explain] what’s being accelerated or delayed. You (KDOT) have support groups like cities, counties, and interest groups that can work on your behalf for the program.

Legislature

- There are lots of impediments to efficiency, such the legislature.
- Politics entering the process more than it should. (More than it has before.) We need a strong technical basis—someone has to watch out for statewide interests. Do not let it become too political.

Aging workforce and generational differences

- As older people retire that knowledge is lost.
- Over the years, activity in professional organizations has declined. Younger engineers have family and time constraints. Maybe not the pride there it used to be.

Open Records

- KDOT is good with the timeliness and openness. Other offices like Attorney General have identified specific people who specialize in the open records requests.

- One interviewee commented, “*Thank God Garden City sued us,*” so that KDOT can be more open to requests for information. The combination of the previous Secretary and legal staff kept KDOT from providing information. As one partner noted in terms of what KDOT should do to improve the way it works with partners, “*[KDOT should] encourage transparency. Everything we do is for the public so we ought to tell the public what we are doing and WHY.*”

Inspectors/LPAs

- While several negative comments were received about the LPA program, one partner noted, “*The LPA is authorized to do the inspections. The program is working fine and though it may not be any faster than KDOT, we [local government] are closer and more involved with it.*”

DBEs/WBEs

- There could be more assistance with the DBE/WBE for help through the maze of paperwork and certification process so you could get a better job done with the subs.
- Periodic meetings [for DBEs/WBEs] with KDOT could make things run smoother. Seven years ago there used to be monthly meetings with KDOT that were very beneficial.

Multi-modal

- Significant freight could be shipped by rail at a lower cost. Look at beef vs. wheat model. Might have to spend money out of state. Savings could be significant. (50-100 million)
- Further implementation of the prepass system for trucks.
- Better intermodal connections for trucks and rail.

Priority Formula

- I can’t figure out how big projects are chosen. The answer I get is that they have a Priority Formula. I don’t buy it. It’s a very rural approach where they assume things stay the same – static. It looks backwards not forward, especially for urban or growth areas.

Web site

- Web site needs to be easier to use. There needs to be a clearer path to design standards. Maybe limited access for counties and cities to see bid tab summary sheets, so that we could have an idea of what average contract prices are. Also access to other CMS and RCD standards would be helpful.
- Web site needs to be easier to use. Could put phonebook on website.

APPENDIX A

KDOT Partnership Project
External One-on-One Interviews
Draft Interview Form

Date _____

Name _____ Title _____

Organization _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____ email address _____

Identities will remain confidential; however, quotes will be used to highlight comments.

General questions – for all interviewees

1. With whom do you work in KDOT (bureaus/sections) and for what purpose (briefly)?

2. Using a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is BEST, how would you rate your interaction with that group?

worst-1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10-best

2a. Why do you feel that way?

3. What 2 or 3 things do you like BEST about working with KDOT? and why?

-
4. **What 2 or 3 things do you like LEAST about working with KDOT?** What do you find frustrating about working with KDOT? **And why?**
5. **Have you noticed any positive or negative trends at KDOT in the last couple of years? What are they?**
6. **Compared to other governmental organizations with whom you work, would you say KDOT is better, about the same, or worse?**
 Better
 About the Same
 Worse
 Don't know
- 6a. **Why do you feel that way?** Do you have examples from other states/state agencies/cities/counties that illustrate the “right” way to do things?
7. **Do you generally think KDOT is responsive to your organization?** [e.g., Do you receive information you request in a timely fashion? Do you think decisions made in a timely fashion?] **And why do you feel that way?**

8. Do you think decisions at KDOT are made consistently and upheld?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

8a. Why do you feel that way?**8b. Are decisions made at the right level?**

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

8c. Why do you feel that way?**9. Do you think KDOT staff at the Districts and Headquarters are approachable?**

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

9a. Why do you feel that way?**10. What should KDOT do to improve the way it works with (or partners with) your organization? And Why?****11. Is there anything that your organization would be willing to do to improve the way you work with (or partner with) KDOT?**

12. Do you have any ideas about specific cost-savings measures that KDOT should think about? Are there any things/activities that you perceive as wasteful in the agency?

14. Would you like to receive info on the Partnership Project as it develops? How can we best communicate with you?

15. Do you have any other comments or concerns you would like to share before we end the interview?

Thank you for your time!

**Add Other Potential Questions that arise in the space below
and ask them as Needed**

Additional Questions for contractors / vendors	Additional questions for local partners
	<p>Are policies/decisions explained in a way that is easily understandable to you and your constituency?</p>
	<p>Variations of Questions 10 & 11:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ! Do you believe a partnership exists between you and your local government? Why/why not? ! What could be done to develop/improve that partnership?