

KDOT Partnership Project  
Advisory Group Meeting #1 Summary  
Manhattan, Kansas  
June 10, 2003

## **I. Opening**

Secretary Deb Miller welcomed and thanked the members of the Advisory Group for agreeing to participate in the KDOT Partnership Project. She explained that the Advisory Group is a broadly representative group and KDOT has tried to balance the group geographically, by interest and expertise in key transportation areas and to include internal and external participation. She noted that the Partnership Project is part of Governor Sebelius' BEST Process to evaluate how all state government functions. Secretary Miller emphasized that this project will identify what is right about the agency and what needs to be improved. Finally, Secretary Miller noted that the agency has about 2,000 active projects that lead to thousands of interactions with the public. While the majority of these interactions go well, it seems like the negative interactions are the ones that get reported in the media and KDOT needs the strong support of the public.

## **II. Overview of the Process and Members' Role**

Jim McLean, Special Assistant to the Secretary and Director of Public Affairs, explained that the Partnership Project is a top-to-bottom review of the agency and represents an opportunity for KDOT to improve on the superior job that its employees are already doing. The project will work to identify some areas where there could be greater efficiencies and improvements. He noted that the project is:

- A top-to-bottom review
- An effort to change the culture where necessary
- A search for efficiency opportunities

In comparison, he noted what the project is not:

- A smokescreen for downsizing
- A symbolic exercise
- Just another study

He explained that the structure of the project includes:

- A work group to manage the project (Rosie Ingram, Marcie Ferrill, Ron McMurry, Jim McLean, Krista Roberts, Ginny Armstrong )
- An advisory group to monitor the process (For more details, see the KDOT Partnership web site).
- The consultant team (lead by ETC Institute) to conduct the research
- The Executive Staff who will ultimately implement the recommendations

As advisors to this process, the Advisory Group will provide important feedback as we talk with external and internal groups and develop recommendations. Members were chosen because of their integrity, leadership, and willingness to serve. The role of the Advisory Group is to:

- Serve as a sounding board for work group
- Generate ideas and other contacts
- Keep the project on track
- Add credibility

A flow chart is being developed that depicts when activities will occur and how those activities fit together to develop recommendations. It will be provided as soon as it is available.

### **III. KDOT Overview**

Mike Lackey, Chairperson of the Partnership Advisory Board, provided background information about KDOT. Highlights included:

- Over time KDOT's labor force has decreased, but efficiency has increased and more work is being done
- KDOT's system ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in the nation in terms of centerline miles but has such a small population that it equates to only 20 people per mile. In comparison, California has 204 people per mile. Mike pointed out that this ratio means there aren't as many taxpayers per mile as many other states. He noted that KDOT is doing a remarkable job with the resources available.
- He provided an overview of revenue streams for KDOT and encouraged people to remember that funds will become even tighter as bonds have to be paid off.
- Overall considerations for the Partnership Project include: safety as the top priority, the need to preserve and protect the state's multi-billion dollar investment in its infrastructure, the economic impact of projects and the economic stimulus they provide, and the credibility of KDOT and the state.

### **IV. Key Issues to be Examined**

Advisory Group members were divided into one of three breakout groups and asked to identify key issues within four general areas that should be examined during the Partnership Project. Those four areas include:

1. External responsiveness (What issues should be examined regarding the way KDOT works with people and organizations outside the agency?)
2. Internal operations (What issues should be examined regarding the way KDOT works with people inside the agency?)

3. Organizational structure (What issues should be examined in the way KDOT is currently organized?)
4. Policy (What issues should be examined in terms of policy that affect the way KDOT works with external and internal partners?)

Key issues in each area are briefly summarized below. More details about the discussions held at each table are provided in [Attachment A](#). It should be noted that these broad issues were used to develop the one-on-one interview questions. Using information from the interviews, more defined scripts will be created to use with the focus groups. Finally, all the previously gathered information will be combined and evaluated to develop questions for the statistically valid surveys of partners and citizens.

#### External Responsiveness – Issues that need to be examined

1. Communication, both internally and externally. A few specific examples included: media relations, the visibility and accessibility of District Engineers, the ability to explain hard to understand technical information, and external web-site is difficult to use.
2. Public involvement or partnering and the timing of that involvement. A few specific examples include: develop support for projects in communities through early involvement not just telling people what KDOT is going to do, expand the public process and think of other groups (not just cities) as partners, involve the public at the right time on projects, consistent and fair treatment of contractors.
3. Procedures. A variety of specific procedures were identified for review (please see [Attachment A](#)); however, a few examples include: contract/billing procedures, accountability/penalties for poor performance of consultants, consistency in requirements for plans between bureaus, quicker final payments, utilities management, most cities use AutoCAD not MicroStation.
4. Decision- making. A few examples of specific issues mentioned include: identify who will make decisions, there is a need to consider factors beyond engineering when making decisions, make decisions quicker.

\*\* It was noted that KDOT is one of the best state agencies in terms of honesty and trust – there are many right people in the right positions.

## Internal Operations

1. Morale and leadership. Examples included: the effectiveness of KDOT leadership, morale issues (especially of long-time employees), mentoring and inter-generational training.
2. Communication. Examples included: Methods for informing employees, how the Districts involve the Areas and how Design works with the Districts, and maintenance staff needs to be included for field checks. On the positive side, it was noted that locating all headquarters staff in one building should help communication.
3. Training, including the applicability of training to the “KDOT way” and project management along with the need for a training coordinator in every District.
4. Job performance, including accountability for poor performance.

## Organizational Structure

1. Decision-making. A few examples of the many issues raised include: how many levels of authority are needed (construction engineer, area engineer, district engineer), where should decisions be made (headquarters or at the district), and barriers to decision making.
2. Responsibilities of various groups and where those responsibilities are located. This also included many issues such as duplication of effort, whether KDOT is too compartmentalized and a project team approach should be used, if Local Projects should be integrated with Road Design, and if traffic engineers should be placed in every District.
3. Permits. The way permits are processed needs to be examined, especially in terms of streamlining and timeliness to complete. It was suggested that a time limit be set for responding to permit requests and/or identify when a permit/information request is external.

## Policy

1. Partnering. The issue of whether partnering works with contractors was raised. Also, it was pointed out that KDOT and local governments need to work together to solve problems.
2. Access control. It was suggested that KDOT’s authority on local access or interconnections needs to be better defined and that local governments should have more power to write permits because they could be more responsive.

3. Personnel policies. Several personnel policies should be reviewed including: increasing part-time and job sharing opportunities, annual leave policy, civil service regulations and pay plan.
4. State laws and policies. While it may be beyond KDOT's control, the issues of the Ethics Law and state contract policy were raised.