



CONSTRUCTOR

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Can Kansas Electeds Stop Ongoing Raids on the ‘Bank of KDOT’?

Everyone has heard the old saying, “The more things change the more they stay the same.” If only that were true for Kansas, where things just keep getting worse for transportation funding.

Since the Transportation Works for Kansas (T-WORKS) program was passed in 2010, Gov. Sam Brownback and like-minded politicians in Topeka have treated it like their friendly neighborhood “Bank of KDOT,” there to finance other state programs as a result of ongoing revenue shortfalls.

When T-WORKS was passed, so was a revenue package to fund the program.

In July, Kansas Budget Director Shawn Sullivan announced an additional \$8 million transfer from KDOT. That raid drew strong opposition from Economic Lifelines, the Kansas transportation coalition that the Heavies co-founded in 1987. Economic Lifelines noted that the \$8 million grab followed more than \$300 million in cuts approved during the 2015 legislative session.

Johnnie Koger, Economic Lifelines co-chair, expressed the frustrations felt by all Kansas transportation advocates when he declared that “Enough is enough. When T-WORKS was passed, so was a revenue package to fund the program. That money has continually been swept into other areas of the budget as a detriment to T-WORKS.”



While work on Kansas highways continued unabated this summer and fall, ongoing diversion of funds earmarked for transportation threaten the completion of many critical projects. It is estimated that more than \$2.1 billion has been “transferred” from transportation to fund other areas of the state’s budget, causing postponement of much-needed maintenance projects.

Koger pointed out that in total, more than \$2.1 billion has been diverted from Kansas transportation to fund other areas of the state budget, resulting in nearly \$300 million in postponed maintenance projects.

The news kept getting worse this past summer and into the fall. In August, Kansas took in \$3.2 million less in revenue than expected. Then on Oct. 1 came the news that Kansas’ September tax revenues came in nearly \$32 million lower than projected,

driving first-quarter revenues down \$61.3 million below estimates and sending projections of the State General Fund ending balance for the current fiscal year to the \$40 million range, down from the previous estimate of about \$70 million.

It’s easy to discern what’s happening here. No. 1, the Kansas T-WORKS Transportation Program does not appear

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MAKING IT BETTER

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Contractors Working Amid Budget Pressures, Uncertainty

Despite budget pressures at the federal, state and local level, Heavies were busy over the summer and into the fall on a wide variety of projects throughout the Kansas City area. Among them:

- **Johnson County Gateway:** Clarkson Construction Co., leading the design-build team of Gateway Interchange Constructors (GIC), continues work on this massive project to improve the I-435/I-35/K10 interchange. The Gateway is a \$288 million, three-year project - the largest ever in Johnson County. Work is scheduled to be substantially complete by Dec. 31, 2016.
- **KCI Runway Replacement:** Ideker Inc. is removing and replacing thousands of feet of 17-inch-thick runway pavement at KCI. The existing concrete pavement is over 20 years old, and it was determined that it had to be replaced to ensure ongoing safe aircraft operations.
- **I-35/Pleasant Valley Road Interchange:** Miles Excavating Inc. is relocating this Clay County intersection to the east, and moving the northbound lanes closer to the southbound lanes. Construction is scheduled for completion by July 2017.
- **Kansas City Streetcar:** Mark One Electric Co. Inc. and J.M. Fahey Construction are currently working on the Kansas City streetcar project. Mark One is performing work such as wiring and setting traffic lights and J.M. Fahey is performing an asphalt overlay on the track route. The 2.2-mile north-south Downtown streetcar will travel along Main Street and connect the River Market to Crown Center and Union Station. Scheduled to open in 2016, the coming streetcar is spurring development projects along the route. Other HCA members that we know of that have worked on the project include: Comanche Construction, Kissick Construction, Realm Construction and Redford Construction. ■



Workforce Diversity Shortfall an Ongoing Dilemma for Organized Labor

The Heavy Constructors Association of Greater Kansas City was pleased when Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon's veto of the latest Right-to-Work bill was sustained by the Missouri General Assembly in September. Our association has long opposed Right-to-Work legislation as anti-labor and against the best interests of our members, their workers and the construction industry.

Nonetheless, our members should not let this victory lull them into a false sense of security, and neither should our partners in labor. Another Right-to-Work bill is likely to surface in the 2016 legislative session.

More importantly: organized labor needs to regain the political ground it has lost. For example, Missouri's latest Right-to-Work debate highlighted long-simmering tensions between unions and members of minority communities. It should be noted that the 2015 Right-to-Work legislation in the Missouri House was sponsored by Rep. Courtney Curtis, an African-American Democrat from Berkeley, an inner-ring suburb of St. Louis.

"It's a 'Right-to-Work' bill," Curtis told St. Louis Public Radio after he introduced the legislation in late January. "But I'm calling it Workforce Opportunity Improvement. For minorities within the unions that aren't getting a fair shake, it would give them better opportunities potentially. And for individuals that are minorities outside of unions, it would give them better opportunities to participate in the work force. They currently don't have that."

Another African-American Missouri legislator who has spoken out strongly on this issue is Sen. Maria Chappelle-Nadal, a Democrat who represents part of St. Louis County. "No African Americans at construction site on Vandeventer between Laclede and Forest Park Pkwy," Chappelle-Nadal tweeted on Sept. 3.

Increasingly, we are seeing the issue of construction workforce inclusion growing as an issue at the state and local levels. Workforce is not to be confused with the Minority Business/Women Business/Disadvantaged Business (MBE/WBE/DBE) goals which is expressed as a company ownership-project participation percentage



on advertised projects.

Missouri Sen. Shalonn "Kiki" Curls, an African American and Democrat who represents the 9th Senatorial District of Kansas City, agreed that a lack of progress in work force diversity has undermined support in the minority community for unions in industries such as construction.

Curls said she opposed Curtis' Right-to-Work bill, but said she understands his motivation. "It is a systemic problem in Kansas City and St. Louis. There is a lack of access to these great job opportunities by the minority community and by women."

Curls said transportation construction jobs provide a good quality of life to many Missouri families, "but we don't feel like a part of that discussion for the most part. It's not that there are no minorities represented in unions, but they are in lower paying jobs."

Phillip Yelder, director of the Kansas City, Mo. Human Relations Department, also agreed that limited numbers of minority union members had been a factor in the Right-to-Work debate.

"From the city's standpoint, we are looking for a diversified work force," Yelder said. "If there are barriers that prevent that

from happening, that is a problem for us."

Yelder said Kansas City currently is participating in a study of public contracting opportunities for minority- and women-owned businesses, but he said that study is not looking at work force diversity per se.

Kansas City's most recent work force diversity study was completed in 2006, Yelder said. He said there has been discussion about conducting another such study but that there are no plans for that right now, due to the expense that would be required.

Meantime, Yelder said Kansas City "is unique in that we have people at the table who have vested interests, but we're all at the table together working through these issues. Heavy Constructors Association members, if they're doing city work, they're going to utilize minorities and women on those projects."

The Heavy Constructors Association of Greater Kansas City has been and will continue to be a part of the discussion and solution for work force diversity that will enable our members and our labor partners to provide career opportunities in construction. ■

Where Will it Lead?

Second Phase of Historic Gateway Project is Underway in Johnson County

Hundreds of men and women are working to build and complete the massive Gateway Interchange Project that is expected to drive a billion dollars-worth of business to Johnson County.

HCAGKC member Clarkson Construction Company is leading the team building the \$288 million second phase of the \$600 million project that was begun in 2012. Clarkson is joint venturing with Kiewit Infrastructure Co.

and George Butler Associates Inc. under the banner “Gateway Interchange Constructors.

The second phase of the project entails the reconstruction of the hugely busy intersection of Interstates 435 and 35, and Kansas Highway 10, which already carries nearly a quarter of a million vehicles a day. The new configuration is to accommodate some 380,000 vehicles per day.

At \$600 million, the overall Gateway

project is the largest undertaking in the Kansas Department of Transportation’s history.

Clarkson and partners are expected to complete Phase 2 of the project by the end of the year 2016. State officials say the new “Gateway” will provide critical and economically invigorating links to Johnson County’s Education and Research Triangle, and the globally connected intermodal facility in nearby Edgerton, KS. ■





JOHNSON COUNTY  **GATEWAY**
A KDOT PROJECT I-435 · I-35 · K-10



Young Talent Benefits from Industry Advancement Fund

The future of transportation and utilities infrastructure construction depends on the next generation of construction engineers and professionals. For many years our Association has provided financial assistance through its' Industry Advancement Fund (IAF) Scholarship Programs for future transportation industry professionals. Annually, the Association's HCA Education/Scholarship Committee, chaired by Bridget Fahey with HCA member J.M Fahey Construction reviews scholarship applications to determine the award of one-year scholarships of up to \$4,000 per year. The committee this year awarded \$19,000 in IAF Scholarships for

the 2015–2016 academic year to the following individuals:

- **Angel Alvarado**, Junior at Kansas State University, majoring in Construction Science and Management
- **Jack Bauers**, Freshman at the University of Missouri-Columbia, majoring in Engineering
- **Coltyn Clark**, Junior at Missouri Western State University, majoring in Civil Engineering
- **Jackson Edds**, Junior at Kansas State University, majoring in Construction Science and Management
- **Joey Evert**, Senior at Missouri Western State University, majoring in Wildlife

Management

- **Gregory Fry**, Junior at Kansas State University, majoring in Civil Engineering
- **Jefferson Padgett**, Freshman at the University of Central Missouri, majoring in Construction Management

HCA Education/Scholarship Committee members working with Bridget Fahey are: Greg Kaaz (LEXECO), Steve Shondell (Heathwood Oil), Chris Winger (Novak Birks), and Steve Miller (Miller Schirger). Bridgette Williams, HCA Deputy Director, staffs the committee. Our thanks to the committee members for their time and dedication to the future of our industry. ■

MoDOT Selects New Director at Critical Juncture

Amid one of the most challenging funding situations in its history, MoDOT announced on Nov. 5 that it had named Patrick McKenna as its new director.



McKenna

McKenna, formerly the deputy commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, is scheduled to begin his new job Dec. 7.

"Missouri faces a lot

of transportation challenges, but MoDOT's employees have proven time and again they can handle it," McKenna said in a release issued by MoDOT. "The department's nationwide reputation for innovation is proof of that."

MoDOT projects that in 2017 the department's annual construction budget will drop from \$596 million to \$325 million, which isn't even enough to keep the state's roads and bridges in the condition they are in today.

"Our association extends a warm welcome to Patrick McKenna as he moves into

the director's position at MoDOT," said Edward DeSoignie, executive director of the Heavy Constructors Association of Greater Kansas City. "He is taking over at a critical juncture. We look forward to working closely with him as we strive to give Missouri the best transportation system possible, whatever the challenges may be."

McKenna is replacing Interim Director Roberta Broecker, who is returning to her previous position as MoDOT's chief financial officer. McKenna is the permanent replacement for former MoDOT director Dave Nichols, who retired May 1. ■

RoadBuilders, Blue Nile Show Staying Power

The Heavies wish to congratulate RoadBuilders Machinery and Supply Co. Inc., which is celebrating 30 years in business; and Blue Nile Contractors Inc., which reached the 10-year mark in 2015.

As a full-service equipment distributor in the Midwest, RoadBuilders has grown to be a leading supplier for the construction, road building, aggregate-processing and scrap-handling industries. The company's growth over the years has included expanding into Nebraska, where it plans to open a fourth location in Norfolk.

Phil McCoy has been president of

RoadBuilders since it began in 1985. "We represent some of the finest products on the market today, and offer exceptional service and support to go with them," he told *Midwest Contractor* magazine in August.

McCoy and RoadBuilders give back to the communities the company operates in, along with supporting and participating in industry-related events and activities.

Blue Nile, a "top tier" minority contractor, specializes in civil construction services. The company was founded in 2005 by Henok Tekeste, who graduated from the ArbaMinch Water Technology Institute in Ethiopia with a Bachelor of Science degree in Sanitary

Engineering. Tekeste furthered his career by earning a Masters degree in Sanitary Engineering from the International Institute for Infrastructure – Hydraulics and Environmental Engineering in the Netherlands, and completed his Masters degree in Civil Engineering at Kansas State University.

Blue Nile is a certified MBE/DBE contractor through the City of Kansas City, Mo., as well as the states of Missouri and Kansas. On its Web site, Blue Nile states that it is a "proactive company, finding solutions to every problem a job might face," and that it "remains true to its founding values of quality, honesty and hard work." ■

Swinging for the Safety Record!

HCA Members Safety Record Awards

HCA President Trey Bowen presented the 2015 HCA Company Safety Awards at the reception following the Heavies' 16th Annual Affiliate Invitational Golf Tournament Aug. 31st at The National Golf Club in Parkville.

Companies receiving awards were:

- **Clarkson Construction Co.**, Class A



Eldon Eikenbary (left) of Clarkson Construction Co. receives Safety Award from Trey Bowen

- (more than 400,000 work hours)
- **Musselman & Hall Contractors**, Class B (200,000 to 399,000 work hours)
- **O'Donnell & Sons Construction** (not pictured), Class C (100,000 to 199,000 work hours)
- **Leavenworth Excavating & Equipment Co.** (LEXECO), Class D (50,000 to



Matt Kaaz (left) of LEXECO accepts Safety Awards for LEXECO and Julius Kaaz Construction from Trey Bowen

- 99,000 work hours)
- **Julius Kaaz Construction**, Class E (50,000 or less work hours)

In his remarks, President Bowden noted the safety awards recognize the outstanding job site safety efforts of HCA member general contractors. Congratulations to all of the award recipients. ■



Doug Hall (left) and Larry Ellenstein (right) of Musselman & Hall Contractors receive Safety Award from Trey Bowen

The team of (from left to right) Tom Quick of Cretcher Heartland, Jim Kissick of Kissick Construction Co., and Mike Ryan of Cretcher Heartland receive trophies from Trey Bowen (far right) for their winning team score of 56 in the 2015 Affiliate Invitational Golf Tournament. The golf tournament helps raise needed funds for the Association's Local PAC that support candidates who support initiatives that call for safer infrastructure.



Kansas Revenue Scheme Continues to Crumble

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to be a high priority for Gov. Brownback. No. 2, Kansas' revenue picture continues to look bleak following the restructuring of the state's income tax that took effect Jan. 1, 2013. You can compare and contrast the Kansas revenue decline with the state of Missouri's revenue growth during the same period of time. Our elected officials

in Topeka keep siphoning off money from transportation to backfill the revenue hole.

Over the summer, the Heavies worked on ways to revitalize transportation funding advocacy in Kansas as well as establish a new advocacy group in Missouri (see Executive Directors column, last page).

The fighting to preserve T-WORKS has

been underway and is expected to intensify in the 2016 legislative session. At stake is funding for transportation infrastructure improvements that support the economy of Kansas and provide good-paying jobs to many area residents. ■



MAKING IT BETTER

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Want more information on our Association, members and issues?

Check out our website, **KCHeavyConstruction.org**. Regarding membership, contact Ed DeSoignie at (816) 753-6443



photography by Jeff Roberts and compliments of MoDOT

A Tale of Two States

In Kansas, during the Great Recession, the Governor and Legislature approved a new 10-year transportation funding program, to the great surprise of many outside of the state. To those in the state familiar with its history and feel for public attitudes, it wasn't as much of a surprise. The 2010 T-Works program was the third, 10-year, large-scale program enacted to continue efforts to maintain its' transportation network, this time including more funding for transit and airport improvements. Those were the days of promise for the future.



De Soignie

Five years, three elections and \$2.3 billion diverted from the T-Works program later the future looks less promising. Each month the general revenue numbers from

Kansas continue their downward glide, followed by yet another announcement of additional T-Works funds diverted to plug the state budget hole.

Five years, three elections and \$2.3 billion diverted from the T-Works program later the future looks less promising.

Economic Lifelines, the statewide transportation advocacy organization is ramped up to push back. We're working to make 2016 a watershed year. So we will be asking for your help in the coming months to communicate with elected officials.

In Missouri, we've been working extensively since the early part of this year to establish a permanent, statewide advocacy organization similar to Economic Lifelines in Kansas. The history in Missouri has been that groups are created for election initiatives that are disbanded after the

election. The hope is that a permanent organization will create a stable, constant and united voice for transportation needs in Jefferson City. We also wish to extend a

welcome to newly-hired MoDOT Director Patrick McKenna. McKenna recently served as deputy commissioner for the New Hampshire's transportation department and formerly worked as chief financial officer for the U.S. Senate. "He is not an engineer, but he is a creative thinker and leader," said Steve Miller, chair of the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission. McKenna's first official day on the job will be December 7. We look forward to working with him in the months and years ahead. ■