

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS**

**REGARDING SENATE BILL 272
CONCERNING INCREASING THE TRANSFER FROM THE STATE HIGHWAY FUND TO
THE PUBLIC USE GENERAL AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT FUND
February 14, 2024**

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

I am Ray Seif, and I am the Director of Aviation for the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT). I am here today to provide testimony on Senate Bill 272. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to meet with you and to provide comments.

The Kansas Airport System includes 109 public use airports. These airports are the backbone of the state's aviation transportation system and support Kansas residents, businesses, educational institutions, emergency operations, and the traveling public. They support agriculture by offering access for aerial applicators, emergency medical transport, military training and exercises, police support, search and rescue operations, aerial surveying, youth education and outreach. These airports generate over \$9 billion in annual economic output.

Of the 109 public use airports throughout the state, 80 are classified in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) making them eligible to receive federal funds for eligible projects.

The Eisenhower Legacy Transportation Program provides \$5 million annually by statute to the Kansas Airport Improvement Program (KAIP). KAIP is a funding program administered by KDOT Aviation and is designed to assist airport sponsors in improving and maintaining the State's 109 public use airports.

KAIP's objectives include:

- Maintaining the system's runway condition rating of "very good"
- Minimizing surface travel time for air ambulance pick-up locations
- Improving safety
- Enhancing airport and community economic development

Eligible projects include preventative maintenance, repair, and reconstruction of pavements, beacons, automated weather observation systems, and airfield lighting. Projects can also include new infrastructure development, vital equipment, design, and planning.

In 2023, KDOT initiated a statewide Airport Facilities Inventory and Needs Assessment to determine infrastructure needs in the state as well as funding levels to support KAIP objectives. A Joint Task Force (JTF) of airport managers, airport planning and engineering consultants, construction professionals, economic development partnerships, a state hospital association, and other industry stakeholders were engaged to evaluate current statewide guidelines for airport infrastructure. The JTF reviewed pavement condition index (PCI) and recommended having a critical PCI

of 65. PCI is a grading scale for pavement ranging from 100 meaning new pavement, to 0 meaning extremely poor and unsafe condition. PCI from 100 to 65 can be maintained economically through preventative maintenance such as crack fill, vegetation control, and seal coat. Below 65, the costs to maintain the system increase exponentially. For every \$1 spent above 65 PCI, you can expect to spend \$5-\$6 below 65.

The current statewide PCI is around 62 with NPIAS airports having a PCI of approximately 64.5 and Non-NPIAS airports having approximately 48.7 PCI.

The JTF report projects a \$33 million dollar shortfall for pavement projects between the current \$5 million available for KAIP by statute, FAA funds and local funds provided directly by the airport sponsor.

The JTF made additional recommendations aimed at improving air ambulance coverage to remote communities.

KAIP has been oversubscribed annually. For FY2025, KDOT Aviation received 135 KAIP grant applications with \$46.5 million requested from KDOT for projects totaling \$83.3 million. Increasing the minimum annual KAIP transfer from \$5 million to \$15 million would allow KDOT Aviation to support more pavement preservation and maintenance projects before the pavements require major reconstruction at an exponentially higher expense. An increase in the minimum transfer would also allow KDOT Aviation to support projects aimed at improving statewide air ambulance access.

Key to our support of this bill is our commitment to working with our local and federal partners to coordinate funding efforts for the 80 public use airports in addition to working with all airports throughout the state to locate other, preferably federal funding sources. We are also committed to helping all airports manage their resources better through education and by being a conduit for information and collaboration.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 272. I am happy to answer any questions at the appropriate time.