

Reactions from the public on September 26, 2008
Pittsburg, Kansas
Reported by Julius Karash

Ann Charles, deputy director of the Kansas Army Ammunition Plant Local Redevelopment Authority in Parsons – “Site selectors are looking at how far we are from a four-lane highway in tenths of a mile. It’s time to push (U.S.) 400 to the next level, as a four-lane corridor. Doing so is critical to maximizing what we have at Great Plains Industrial Park.”

Bob Marshall, board chairman of the Fort Scott Area Chamber of Commerce, executive director of the Bourbon County Economic Development Council and Kansas Senate candidate – “To have economic development, to attract it to Kansas, we have to have the infrastructure. The primary issue that I would address, that we need, is the completion of U.S. Highway 69, all the way to I-44 in Oklahoma.”

Dean Mann, T-LINK member and Board Chairman of Citizens Bank in Fort Scott – “Certainly, Southeast Kansas has some great transportation needs, especially in the highway area. It’s going to be a challenge to work through this process, of where we try to match up the most critical needs with the amount of money that’s available to spend to meet those needs.”

Ed McKechnie, Chief Commercial Officer for Watco Cos. Inc., a Pittsburg-based operator of short-line railroads – “We’ve not asked for dollars where the railroad can support itself. By and large, through tax policy, we already support other modes of transportation.”

Fred Gress, city manager of Parsons – “The T-LINK Calculator – I hope there is a huge marketing program set in place to get a lot of citizens in Kansas to use and look at it. It’s high time they recognized how expensive this business is.”

Howard W. Smith, assistant to the president of Pittsburg State University – “Pittsburg State has had continued growth over the last 10 years. A lot of regional business is tied to us in some way. We would like to see the four-laning of 69 to I-44. We’re the only Regents institution in the state without four-lane highway all the way in and out. “

Lisa Kuehn, executive director, Coffeyville Area Chamber of Commerce – “The companies we deal with are not single-faceted, so why would we want to have a transportation program that is single-faceted? We need a transportation program that is multi-faceted in order to better serve our economy.”

Rep. Bob Grant of Cherokee – “I feel like the Legislature and KDOT have fulfilled their promises. And in doing that, I think the taxpayers have more confidence in us.”

Rep. Julie Menghini of Pittsburg - “I want to emphasize the fact that I appreciate the multimodal concept. Rail helps us keep preservation dollars down by taking some of that weight off our highways. Airports help keep businesses in southeast Kansas.”

Robert Bever, Montgomery County Public Works Coordinator – “We need all that we can get just to maintain our rural sector. A lot of our rural guys are putting in grain elevators that are much, much larger than we used to have. We’re trying to transport bigger product to ethanol plants. Please do not forget the needs of your local county people that need some help with infrastructure.”

Rick Knight, advocacy coordinator for the Southeast Kansas Independent Living Resource Center (SKIL) in Parsons - “Transportation services in Southeast Kansas vary from one community to the next, and with the possible exception of Pittsburg, do not even begin to meet the needs of people with disabilities or the elderly.”

Sen. Duane Umbarger of Thayer – “There’s been a lot of discussion on how to fund this. You’re going to have to have a red map (of dedicated projects). That’s the buy-in. You put the flexibility in that after five years, other projects can be added.”

Tammy Dickson, recruiting manager with Staff Management in Coffeyville, which works with the Amazon.com distribution center in Coffeyville – “I want to have something that is cost-effective for the employees to get to and from work, to get more people in Kansas to work. And it does need to be regional, not town by town, due to the people we pull from the rural communities.”