

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Minutes of the 1st Meeting of the 2022 Interim

June 2, 2022

Call to Order and Roll Call

The 1st meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Transportation was held on Thursday, June 2, 2022, at 12:00 PM, in Ballroom D and E at the Northern Kentucky Convention Center in Covington, Kentucky. Representative Ken Upchurch, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Ken Upchurch, Co-Chair; Senators Karen Berg, Brandon J. Storm, Johnnie Turner, Phillip Wheeler, Mike Wilson, Max Wise, and David Yates; Representatives Josh Branscum, Kevin D. Bratcher, Randy Bridges, Jonathan Dixon, Ken Fleming, David Hale, Samara Heavrin, Regina Huff, Thomas Huff, Derek Lewis, Savannah Maddox, Shawn McPherson, Sal Santoro, Tom Smith, Cherlynn Stevenson, Ashley Tackett Laferty, Walker Thomas, and Buddy Wheatley.

Guests: Brent Cooper, President and CEO, Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce; Mark Policinski, CEO, Executive Director, OKI - Regional Council of Governments; Mike Hancock, Deputy Secretary, Transportation Cabinet (KYTC); Sarah Jackson, REAL ID Project Manager, KYTC; Bob Yeager, District 6, Chief District Engineer, KYTC

LRC Staff: John Snyder, Dana Fugazzi, Brandon White, and Christina Williams

Opening Remarks

Brent Cooper, President and CEO, Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce gave welcoming remarks and stressed the major economic impact Northern Kentucky has across Kentucky. He thanked the members for the General Assembly's role in the development of Northern Kentucky's robust economy.

Road Fund Update

Deputy Secretary Hancock updated the committee on Road Fund receipts through April, which were up by 2.3 percent according to the Office of the State Budget Director. Based on year-to-date tax collections, revenues must increase by 2.2 percent for the remainder of the year to meet the revenue estimate for this year. The interim revenue estimate calls for Road Fund revenues to increase only 1.6 percent for the remainder of FY-2022, which would result in a small revenue shortfall of about \$11.2 million. Motor

fuel revenue is up 4.8 percent through April, but motor vehicle usage tax collections fell 18.1 percent during the same period. Deputy Secretary Hancock stated there were timing issues associated with the collections in April which yielded lower numbers than expected. He added May receipts will be available around June 10th.

Brent Spence Bridge Project

Mark Policinski, CEO, Executive Director, OKI - Regional Council of Governments briefly commented on the Brent Spence Bridge project. Mr. Policinski stated OKI is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the greater Cincinnati region, which includes Campbell, Boone, and Kenton counties in Kentucky. As the MPO, OKI has authority over all federally funded surface transportation projects in the Northern Kentucky region.

Mr. Policinski discussed the need for modern infrastructure for the United States to win globally. The Brent Spence Bridge has literally been the poster child for American infrastructure projects. When the previous federal infrastructure bill was being debated on the floor of the United States Senate, there was only one picture of an infrastructure project on display, the Brent Spence Bridge project. This bridge has been nationally recognized by industry professionals, freight experts, and a line of American Presidents for its preeminence among necessary American infrastructure projects.

The specifics of the Bridge's failings support this dire distinction. The Brent Spence Bridge opened in 1963 and was designed to handle approximately 80,000 vehicles per day. Today, upwards of 160,000 vehicles cross the bridge daily. The bridge was designed to handle 3,000 to 4,000 trucks per day but currently handles more than 13,000. The bridge is projected to carry 200,000 vehicles each day by 2030. As such, the Brent Spence Bridge was designated as functionally obsolete in the 1990s. While the Bridge is structurally sound, it is unable to carry the amount of its daily traffic. For over two decades, experts have known the bridge cannot be modified to meet today's traffic and safety needs.

Several safety instances have occurred, including chunks of concrete falling from bridge's upper deck onto the lower deck's traffic, shutting down the bridge in both directions for hours while crews worked to clear the debris. A concrete beam fell from the bridge and onto parked cars during Cincinnati Bengals game. An 8-car crash sent one car hurtling off the top deck, falling 25 feet to the bottom deck. Most recently, a truck accident with a 1,500 degree fire with a 1,000 foot fire ball, shut down the bridge for 41 days in November 2020.

The national impact of the bridge's failures is obvious, as the northern entry of the Brent Spence Bridge brings together three international trade corridors, I-75, I-74 and I-71. These trade corridors connect Minnesota, Canada and New England to not only Northern Kentucky but also Atlanta and Miami. The lynchpin of freight movements along these corridors is the Brent Spence Bridge. The bridge is one of the busiest trucking

routes in US, carrying more than \$1 billion worth of freight daily. With expected significant future growth, the lack of a companion bridge will limit the region's ability to prosper in the years to come.

The Brent Spence Bridge leads to and from Northern Kentucky International Airport (CVG), which is home to billion-dollar investments from DHL and Amazon. Mr. Policinski stated CVG deserves special mention because it is going to be the economic driver of the Northern Kentucky region for the next decade, as CVG is the 7th largest cargo airport in North America. It is the only top ten North American port that is not reliant on energy. CVG relies on ecommerce.

There are one million jobs in the OKI region and 70% are located within five miles of this corridor of which the Brent Spence Bridge is the backbone. Approximately \$650 million of local freight goes over the bridge daily.

Deputy Secretary Hancock stated the Brent Spence Bridge project is actually more than one bridge, it is an eight-mile-long corridor project from Dixie Highway in Kentucky through the Western Hills Viaduct in Ohio. The existing Brent Spence Bridge is structurally sound and will remain in service; however, it does need help.

The Brent Spence Bridge carries both I-71 and I-75 and approximately 160,000 vehicles per day including more than 13,000 trucks per day. The bridge was originally built to carry approximately 80,000 vehicles per day. In 1985, the bridge was reconfigured to provide an additional travel lane on each deck. Presently there are four 11-foot lanes and one-foot shoulders.

New funding for the project will support construction of a new companion bridge, not a replacement bridge, as well as updates to the existing bridge and the interstate network throughout the corridor. Long-term use of the existing Brent Spence Bridge, as well as a new companion structure, would allow for the separation of local and through traffic. This separation would improve safety and support better access to the Covington and Cincinnati business districts. Project costs will be shared by each state. The cost of the new companion bridge will be split 50/50 by Ohio and Kentucky, and each state will pay for the approach work on its respective end of the bridge.

The Brent Spence Bridge project will cost approximately \$2.9 billion, a cost too large to fund through traditional funding sources. The passage by Congress of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and its mega-project grant programs has created a once-in-a-generation shot at getting the kind of federal dollar infusion needed to launch this project.

Ohio and Kentucky submitted a Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant application for nearly \$1.7 billion in federal grant funding. There is also a plan to submit the same basic application for an upcoming Bridge Discretionary Grant Program to give the United

States Department of Transportation (USDOT) maximum opportunity to cover a majority of the project costs.

The Kentucky General Assembly strengthened the position in the federal grant process by approving Governor Beshear's request for \$250 million from the State General Fund to enhance the offer of matching funds. From past experience with federal grant programs, bringing additional matching funds to the table clearly demonstrates to USDOT the importance of the project to the state and encourages them to be more responsive to the grant funding request.

Near-Term activities for the project team include completing the environmental reevaluation, developing the Initial Financial Plan (IFP), and preparing the Project Management Plan (PMP), all necessary for federal approval to be granted. With regard to the ultimate construction of the project, there is already considerable interest from the road and bridge-building industry. On Tuesday, June 7th, Kentucky and Ohio will be hosting an industry forum for interested potential contractors.

Completion of the Brent Spence Bridge Corridor Project will not only improve the quality of life for millions of Americans who use the federal highway system, but it will present the opportunity to invest in local businesses and a growing workforce by improving travel safety along one of the most important national corridors for commerce and freight.

In response to a question asked by Chairman Ken Upchurch concerning the approximate \$11.2 million shortfall in Road Fund dollars, Deputy Secretary Hancock stated those estimates were made based on fuel prices in April 2022.

In response to a question asked by Chairman Upchurch concerning inflation costs and the \$2.9 billion price tag for the Brent Spence Bridge project, Deputy Secretary Hancock stated KYTC is looking for ways to shave costs of the project even more in order to keep the project within the projected budget.

Chairman Upchurch acknowledged Northern Kentucky legislators, specifically Representative Sal Santoro, and their mission to keep the Brent Spence Bridge toll-free. In response to a question asked by Chairman Upchurch, Deputy Secretary Hancock stated there are no estimates on what revenue tolls would have brought in from the bridge as this project was pursued without the intent of tolling.

In response to a question asked by Chairman Upchurch, Deputy Secretary Hancock stated approximately \$104 million was collected in 2021 from tolls on the Louisville-Southern Indiana Ohio River Bridge. Mr. Hancock added financially the two projects are very different. The Louisville-Southern Indiana Ohio River Bridge project is a system that is still being built, and the Brent Spence Bridge is a mature transportation system in the greater Cincinnati area.

In response to a question asked by Representative Kevin Bratcher, Deputy Secretary Hancock stated the reason behind the Louisville Bridge being tolled and the Brent Spence Bridge not being considered for tolling is that the projects were on two different time-frames. He added when the Louisville-Southern Indiana Ohio River Bridge project was pursued, there was not a federal highway investment program the size of the recent infrastructure bill passed by congress.. He added with the Louisville-Southern Indiana Ohio River Bridge project, KYTC was working to use all of the tools at their disposal to get the project implemented as quickly as possible, and at that time that was the avenue that was available to complete the project.

Representative Kevin Bratcher discussed the Louisville Metro-Council's desire to do away with tolling of the Louisville bridges. Deputy Hancock added that the tolls are structured around long-term debt mechanisms which is not simple and difficult to pay the costs off and move on.

Senator David Yates stated as a former member and President of the Louisville Metro-Council, the reduction of tolls was considered for the Louisville Bridges in the event a circumstance would allow.

In response to a question asked by Representative Tom Smith, Deputy Secretary Hancock stated he can provide a breakdown of what Kentucky will receive out of the \$1.7 trillion infrastructure bill that was passed by Congress.

Regional Driver License Model and Processes in the Northern Kentucky Region

Sarah Jackson, REAL ID Project Manager, briefly updated the committee on Northern Kentucky regional driver licensing offices. The regional offices for Northern Kentucky include offices in Burlington, Covington, Independence, and Maysville. A person may choose any regional office in Kentucky regardless of county of residence for their driver licensing needs. The driver may choose to obtain a standard license or a REAL ID license, and can choose from a four or an eight year card lifespan. The driver licensing regional offices accept appointments or walk-ins. Payment options include credit/debit cards, cash, personal check, certified check, or money order.

One option that is available to renew a driver's license is the mail-in program for those who want to skip a trip to a regional office. The program also offers an address change feature. To date, nearly 12,500 Kentuckians have renewed their credentials by mail.

Another option that is available for renewing a driver's license is to utilize the online license renewal program. The program easily handles the most traffic from Kentuckians wanting to not travel to a regional office. To date, nearly 147,000 Kentuckians have renewed their licenses or ID card online.

Popup portable driver licensing offices are also an option to obtain credentials. The popup driver licensing program has already been in 82 of the state's 94 popup-eligible counties in just five months. The popup driver licensing offices will travel to Bracken and Harrison Counties in July.

Kentucky State Police (KSP) administers all permit, driver, and commercial driver license testing for the Commonwealth. Testing services are offered Monday through Friday by appointment only. Applicants who require testing by KSP for a permit, driver license, or commercial driver license may make an appointment with KSP through its website.

The REAL ID enforcement date is May 3, 2023. By that date, a form of REAL ID will be required for U.S. commercial air travel, to visit military bases, and to visit federal facilities that require identification. Other federally approved documents, such as a valid passport, are acceptable forms of REAL ID.

In response to a question asked by Representative Walker Thomas, Ms. Jackson stated when finding and obtaining property for regional licensing offices, KYTC must go through the Finance Cabinet.

Northern Kentucky Transportation Projects

Bob Yeager, District 6, Chief District Engineer, KYTC gave a brief overview of several important transportation projects in various stages in Northern Kentucky. The 4th Street Bridge project connecting Covington to Newport over the Licking River is currently forming an aesthetics committee to assist in developing final bridge design features. This project is planning for a construction letting in late fall of 2023.

The I-275/I-71/75 interchange reconstruction project currently has people developing possible solutions to the congested interchange. As of now, there is no construction date or funding for construction of this project. The initial study of the I-75 interchange at Walton Kentucky is underway with planning to include a new interchange on I-75 south of Walton. This was recently added to the Six-Year Road Plan.

The Donaldson Road reconstruction letting is scheduled for September 2022. The Mineola Pike reconstruction project has been awarded with work to begin soon. The Infra Grant Project (KY338 interchange, KY536 interchange, and I-75 lane addition) has a total cost of \$120 million, with Grant funding of \$70 million.

The I71/75 additional lanes project is expected to be completed by the fall of 2022. The KY338 interchange project is expected to be completed by the fall of 2023. The KY536 interchange project is expected to be completed by the fall of 2022.

The Graves Road project (the new interchange on I-275 in Boone County) has been delivered by design/build and the interchange opened in December 2020. The project is expected to be completed by July 2022.

Staff Recognition

Chairman Upchurch recognized long-time LRC Transportation Staff Committee Analyst Brandon White for his exemplary service to the committee. Mr. White has been named the Committee Staff Administrator for the newly established Commission on Race and Access to Opportunity within the LRC.

With no further business to come before the committee, Chairman Upchurch adjourned at 1:19 P.M.