

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Minutes of the 1st Meeting of the 2025 Interim

June 3, 2025

Call to Order and Roll Call

The first meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Transportation was held on June 3, 2025, at 1:00 PM in Room 149 of the Capitol Annex. Representative John Blanton, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative John Blanton, Co-Chair; Senator Jimmy Higdon, Co-Chair; Senators Cassie Chambers Armstrong, Karen Berg, Donald Douglas, Greg Elkins, Brandon Smith, Brandon J. Storm, Phillip Wheeler, Gex Williams, and Mike Wilson; Representatives Josh Branscum, Randy Bridges, Anne Gay Donworth, Myron Dossett, Daniel Elliott, David Hale, John Hodgson, Thomas Huff, Matthew Lehman, Bobby McCool, Amy Neighbors, Tom Smith, Ashley Tackett Laferty, Walker Thomas, and Ken Upchurch.

Guests: Jim Gray, Secretary, Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC); James Ballinger, State Highway Engineer, KYTC; Chris Jones, Chief District Engineer, District 11, KYTC; Jason Siwula, Deputy State Highway Engineer, KYTC; Bobbi Jo Lewis, Commissioner, Department of Rural and Municipal Aid, KYTC; Jon Johnson, Assistant General Counsel, KYTC; and Robert Riggs, Board Member, Aviation Museum of Kentucky.

LRC Staff: Dana Fugazzi, Ashley Nash, and Christina Williams.

Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) Response to Recent Severe Weather in Southeastern Kentucky

Jim Gray, Secretary, KYTC; James Ballinger, State Highway Engineer, KYTC; and Chris Jones, Chief District Engineer, District 11, KYTC, updated the committee on the KYTC's response to the tornadic activity that hit Southeastern Kentucky on May 16, 2025. The storms impacted several regions, and multiple roads were blocked by debris in overnight hours. KYTC crews cleared most debris by the weekend and crews west of I-75 primarily patrolled and cleaned up roadways through the weekend. Crews monitored flood prone areas, placed high-water signs where needed, and transported water and meals to residents. There has been continued coordination with Kentucky Emergency Management (KYEM), police, fire crews and local officials, on cleanup and recovery. Governor Beshear signed an executive order allowing duplicate licenses, IDs, vehicle registrations, and titles for storm survivors at no cost.

Co-Chair Higdon thanked KYTC for their first responder service. He mentioned the recent tornado in Washington County and KYTC's vital role in clearing the roadways.

Representative Smith thanked Governor Beshear and Secretary Gray for their quick response to the natural disaster.

Senator Storm thanked members, KYEM, Chris Jones, and KYTC for their response. He briefly touched on an additional 1,530 properties affected by the storm.

In response to Representative Lehman, Mr. Ballinger stated large efforts are made to inspect all infrastructure to identify any damage that could cause safety issues.

Implementation of Legislation from the 2025 Session - Work Zone Safety

Jason Siwula, Deputy State Highway Engineer, KYTC, updated the committee on KYTC's implementation of House Bill 664 from the 2025 Regular Session, which allows the use of automated speed devices to transmit information to law enforcement officers to assist with speed enforcement in work zones. Mr. Siwula stated a number of vendors have been contacted, and KYTC will be evaluating the proposals. The devices will identify motorists speeding in work zones and will transmit that information to a sworn law enforcement officer stationed either at or near the end of the work zone, who will use that information to issue a live citation. KYTC has been working with Kentucky State Police (KSP) and members of the Kentucky Association of Highway Contractors to ensure implementation is done as a partnership. KYTC is also working on proper communication and signage. KYTC's goal is to place a few of the devices in the fall of 2025, before implementing a more robust rollout.

Chair Blanton stressed this new legislation was not about the issuance of citations, rather it was about slowing traffic in work zones to improve safety.

Implementation of Legislation from the 2025 Session - Local Assistance Road Program

Bobbi Jo Lewis, Commissioner, Department of Rural and Municipal Aid, KYTC, updated the committee on implementation of HJR 46 from the 2025 Legislative Session, the County Priority Projects Program (CPPP), which identified local road rehabilitation projects approved by the General Assembly for FY 2025-26. KYTC is preparing 106 Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) for the awards contained in HJR 46. The MOAs are to be sent out for processing on or about July 1, 2025, when funding is available.

Commissioner Lewis also discussed implementation of the new Local Assistance Road Program (LARP), established under HB 546 of the 2025 Regular Session, which replaces the CPPP and sets out requirements and guidelines for cities and counties to submit

rehabilitation projects for the General Assembly to consider each year, beginning in FY 2026-27. The application cycle opened June 1, 2025 and closes on October 1, 2025. The updated application form includes new LARP requirements and limitations included in House Bill 546, such as photos every 300 ft and a required local match. Reporting forms are prepared and ready to capture the required information as provided by local agencies. A scoring matrix has also been developed by KYTC to be used by all districts. Roads are scored by the following: preservation of assets, average daily traffic, any recent improvements, safety, cost, and a priority ranking within the highway district.

In response to Chair Blanton, Commissioner Lewis stated the issue of population and aid being split between counties has been recognized and is being evaluated. She stated the average daily traffic number has been provided by the pavements branch.

In response to Chair Blanton, Commissioner Lewis stated monies have been authorized for the 2024 Regular Session projects, but she is not sure if the counties or cities have completed the work yet, as they have not all submitted reimbursement requests.

Co-Chair Higdon reiterated the reasoning behind a lag in road paving, which is directly related to the motor fuels tax. He advocated for a change in the collection formula and a change in collection from commercial electric vehicles.

Consideration of Referred Administrative Regulations

Jon Johnson, Staff Attorney/Assistant General Counsel, KYTC, provided a brief explanation of 601 KAR 12:120 and 601 KAR 12:120 Emergency, regarding visual acuity and visual field testing of applicants for initial or renewal instruction permit, initial or renewal operator's license, or reinstatement. In response to Chair Blanton concerning a conflict with the Medical Review Board's definition of the minimum horizontal visual field in 601 KAR 13:100, Mr. Johnson stated KYTC will amend that regulation later to be consistent with 601 KAR 12:120. 601 KAR 12:120 was not found to be deficient nor deferred and will become effective upon adjournment of the committee meeting.

Discussion of a Potential Aviation Impact Study

Robert Riggs, Board Member, Aviation Museum of Kentucky, discussed a potential aviation impact study. Eight years ago, an economic impact study on aerospace parts, manufacturing, and export found it was a \$10.85 billion industry with approximately 17,500 jobs. Mr. Riggs advocated for the General Assembly to direct effected agencies to complete another study to determine the assets, shortfalls, and needs of aerospace manufacturing and aviation systems.

In response to Representative Elliot, Mr. Riggs stated the initial study did not provide on going recommendations.

Other Information

Chair Blanton discussed scams sent to cell phones purporting to be from KYTC to collect monies and threatening license suspensions if the funds are not paid. These texts are in no way accurate or coming from KYTC, and should be ignored.

Chair Blanton also informed members of a memo in the meeting materials regarding motor fuels tax rates for Fiscal Year 2026.

Adjournment

With no further business, Chair Blanton adjourned the meeting at 2:25 PM.