INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the 2026 Interim

November 9, 2026

Call to Order and Roll Call
The fifth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Transportation was held on November 9, 2026, at 1:00 PM ET/12:00 PM CT in Room 149 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Jimmy Higdon, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:
Members: Senator Jimmy Higdon, Co-Chair; Representative John Blanton, Co-Chair; Senators Gary Clemons, Donald Douglas, Greg Elkins, Brandon Smith, Brandon J. Storm, and Phillip Wheeler; and Representatives Ryan Bivens, Josh Branscum, Randy Bridges, Anne Gay Donworth, Myron Dossett, David Hale, Samara Heavrin, Thomas Huff, Mary Beth Imes, Derek Lewis, Bobby McCool, Amy Neighbors, Rachel Roarx, Tom Smith, Ashley Tackett Laferty, Walker Thomas, and Ken Upchurch.

Guests: Dr. Reg Souleyrette, Program Manager, Planning and Decision Analytics, Kentucky Transportation Center (KTC); Dr. Ben Blandford, Program Manager and Senior Research Scientist, KTC; Dr. Caitlin Northcutt, Director, UK DRIVE Lab, KTC; John Ellis Jr., Ellis Transportation, President, Kentucky Towing Association; Jerry Summers, County Judge/Executive, Bullitt County; Jon Waters, Director, Emergency Management, Bullitt County; Corey Farris, Assistant Director, Emergency Management, Bullitt County; Kentucky State Police (KSP); and Maj. Emily Horton, Director, Division of Commercial Vehicle Enforcement, KSP; Jeff Klusmeier, Unit 555; and Michelle Grubbs, Truck Safety Coalition; Jeremy Slinker, Deputy Secretary, Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC); and Tom McDaniel, Director, Division of Motor Carriers, KYTC.

LRC Staff: John Snyder, Ashley Nash, and Christina Williams.

Approval of October 06, 2026 minutes

A motion was made by Senator Douglas and seconded by Representative Upchurch to approve the minutes from the October 06, 2026 meeting. Minutes were approved by voice vote without objection.

An Investigation of Teen Driver Involved Crashes in Kentucky

Dr. Reg Souleyrette, Program Manager, Planning and Decision Analytics, KTC; Dr. Ben Blandford, Program Manager and Senior Research Scientist, KTC; and Dr. Caitlin Northcutt, Director, UK DRIVE Lab, KTC, briefed the committee on teen driver involved crashes. They outlined a strategic highway safety plan and broke that plan down into areas of emphasis. Some findings included that teen drivers are overrepresented in fatal crashes, and the first six months of driving for teens are the riskiest. Crash rates for young drivers from 2024 was provided as well as a COVID-19 Pandemic analysis of teen driver-involved crashes. Crash risk predictors, and behavioral factors in teen driver-involved crashes were also shared, along with evidence-based solutions to improve teen driver safety.

In response to Co-Chair Blanton, Dr. Blandford stated the increase in fatalities post pandemic occurred in drivers of all age, and the increase occurred nationwide. He added that the average speed of drivers has increased post pandemic, which is likely a contributing factor. Dr. Northcutt stated that the developmental maturity is different for children that grew up during the pandemic, and it will likely take time to understand the global impact of the pandemic, and how that effected crash rates.

In response to Senator Douglas, Dr. Blandford stated for the strategic highway safety plan research, they look at the overall number of fatalities, instead of just fatal crashes.

In response to Senator Wheeler, Dr. Souleyrette stated data collected from other states has shown that lowering the driving age, which allows for more driving experience, can be helpful.

In response to Representative Dossett, Dr. Northcutt stated they have not studied the number of high schools that still provide driver training, but are starting an analysis of the counties, what their vulnerabilities are, and what they can provide.

In response to Chairman Higdon, Dr. Blandford stated there are specific codes from crash reports that are used to classify aggressive driving which can range from speeding, to weaving in and out of traffic, to following too closely and more.

Chair Higdon encouraged a proposed hands-free bill that would not only help with all crashes, but would help with teen crashes specifically. He also encouraged looking into the number of teens that were not wearing seat belts during the crashes.

In response to Representative Thomas concerning new technology with vehicles such as lane assist or assisted driving, Dr. Northcutt stated the effects of those features are being studied at the national level. Currently, however, those types of automotive assistance technologies are not marketed as improving safety.

Towing Industry Issues Arising from a Crash on I-65 in Bullitt County

County Judge/Executive Jerry Summers, Bullitt County, briefed the committee on the towing industry issues that were highlighted after a crash on I-65 in Bullitt County in August, 2026 that included hazardous material.

In response to Chair Higdon, Judge Summers stated that authority to control accident scenes typically rest with local communities.

In response to a follow-up question concerning what the General Assembly can do to help alleviate issues that may arise in this process, Judge Summers stated a statute establishing local and rural agencies have authority to designate or use their services rather than private carriers would be helpful.

In response to Senator Wheeler, Judge Summers stated a sheriff can be dispatched to an accident scene; however, when the interstate is closed the incident becomes more complicated.

In response to Representative Bivens, John Ellis, President, Kentucky Towing Association, stated he believes that when a vehicle is in the road, law enforcement should have the capability to make decisions regarding clearing the scene.

In response to Co-Chair Blanton, Judge Summers stated they currently have the capabilities to clean up hazardous spills on roadways, but on the day in discussion, they did not have those capabilities. Co-Chair Blanton stated it is always the priority to get the blocked roadway opened safely. He added if another incident were to occur before legislative action can be taken, control of the scene must be taken.

Representative Dossett expressed his full support as similar incidents have happened in his area as well. He also cautioned about the ongoing trend of distracted driving concerning cell phones and other electronics, and encouraged the usage of specific applications for truck drivers.

In response to Senator Elkins, Judge Summers stated the responding agency is the agency tasked with calling the wrecker service needed for an incident. The local fire department is then contacted, which will then contact hazardous material teams.

Mr. Ellis stated that once a situation is ruled as hazmat, the Emergency Management Agency (EMA) is called in as well as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), but the carrier has the right to call their own cleanup company, if they are in the area or on the list.

In response to Chair Higdon, Mr. Ellis stated at committee on which he served in 2016 recommended for KSP to maintain incident management on the federal highways and to provide pictures as needed.

Driver Testing Update

Major Emily Horton, Director, Division of Commercial Vehicle Enforcement, KSP, gave an update on the driver testing and skills test pilot program. She stated the Driver's Testing Branch has a new commander, Lieutenant Rufus Shearer. With funding 2026 RS HB 500, KSP is opening three new testing offices in Bardstown, Leitchfield, and Hurstbourne.

Major Horton stated testing numbers for 15-year-olds for instruction permits are leveling off. The skills test pilot program that was established in 2024 RS SB 107 is currently being conducted in 5 counties.

In response to Chair Higdon, Major Horton stated having more resources and funding available is always helpful for KSP and every program offered.

Commercial Vehicle Enforcement (CVE)

Major Horton updated the committee on weigh station operations including staffing and the patrol of rural routes. She stated there are currently 14 weigh stations, one which is staffed virtually, and two sites that are currently not staffed, Kenton and Hardin Counties. She also briefed the committee on the number of inspectors employed as well as their rate of pay.

CVE typically focuses resources needed in high crash areas which do not typically encompass rural routes, however, if an issue is brought to their attention, patrol will be provided in and around needed areas. CVE also has multiple blitzes throughout the year that target speed, occupant protection, and impaired driving.

In response to Co-Chair Blanton, Major Horton responded that they have both Chapter 16 (KSP officers) and Chapter 18 (civilian officers under the state personnel system) as officer personal within CVE.

Representative Smith and Senator Storm brought attention to a congestion issue at a weigh station in Laurel County.

Citizen Discussion of Truck Safety

Jeff Klusmeier, Unit 555, and Ms. Michelle Grubbs, Traffic Safety Coalition, each told personal stories of instances where there were shortcomings in motor vehicle safety procedures that resulted in serious accidents that included fatalities of loved ones. They encouraged safety legislation to prevent such accidents.

Consideration of Referred Administrative Regulations

Jeremey Slinker, Deputy Secretary, KYTC, and Tom McDaniel, Director, Division of Motor Carriers, KYTC, briefed the committee on Administrative Regulation 601 KAR 001:200. No further action was taken.

Adjournment

With no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:30 PM.