



# INTERIM RECORD

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## Committee hears update on state road fund

by Jordan Hensley - LRC Public Information

FRANKFORT — Lawmakers on the Interim Joint Committee on Transportation had questions for the Transportation Cabinet following a state road fund update during the committee's Aug. 18 meeting.

Shaun McKiernan, the cabinet's executive director of budget and fiscal management, told the committee the state ended the 2024-25 fiscal year with a \$61.6 million surplus in the road fund.

The motor fuels revenue total was 3.5% below the estimate, but the motor vehicle usage tax revenue performed nearly 11% stronger than predicted, McKiernan said.

"The bottom line is the road fund revenue was \$38.5 million greater than the enacted estimate," McKiernan added.

A drop in the motor fuels tax rate went into effect at the beginning of 2025, which is the main reason the revenue estimate was lower than predicted, McKiernan said.

A surprise increase in motor vehicle tax revenue is not the only reason the road fund surplus is higher than estimated.

"Net spending coming in below budget added \$8.3 million to the surplus," McKiernan said. He added that the 2024-26 biennium budget directs any road fund surplus to be allocated to the highway construction program.



Committee co-chair Sen. Jimmy Higdon, R-Lebanon, speaks on how lower motor fuel sales tax revenue leads to less funding for local road projects across the state. The discussion was part of the Interim Joint Committee on Transportation meeting on Aug. 18.

Committee co-chair Sen. Jimmy Higdon, R-Lebanon, said the drop in motor fuels tax revenue will be a "big hit" to the funding allocated for city, county and rural secondary roads. Statute currently allocates a portion of motor fuels tax revenue to the Local Assistance Road Program.

"I just want to emphasize why we're not blacktopping and repairing all the rural secondary roads that we should," Higdon said.

Higdon also noted the reason motor vehicle usage tax revenue is up is because of inflation.

Rep. Matthew Lehman, D-Newport, asked McKiernan if there are other reasons why motor fuel tax revenues are down.

"Is fuel efficiency (and) the rise in electric vehicles ... is that also a factor? Or is that a relatively minor factor?" Lehman asked.

McKiernan said drivers using less motor fuel due to more fuel-efficient vehicles is a factor in the drop in revenue.

In addition to questions about tax revenue, a few lawmakers wanted to discuss the length of time it takes for road projects to be completed in Kentucky.

Rep. Samara Heavrin, R-Leitchfield, said she's heard complaints about how long it takes for road

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projects to be completed.

“Could you give us any update of why it’s taken so long for projects to (be completed), even though the money is there, it’s in the transportation plan and has been probably for several cycles?” she asked.

Mike Hancock, deputy secretary for the Transportation Cabinet, said the cabinet works hard to complete every project.

“We have a tremendous load of projects in the highway plan,” Hancock said. “We’ve had conversations about funding and about how much funding there is and how we could stretch those across as many projects as we can.”

Hancock said a lot goes into executing these projects, such as utility relocation.

“There’s so much that’s going on, and that’s not always readily obvious,” Hancock said. “It’s like the duck paddling on top of the water. You don’t always see the feet churning underneath.”

Sen. Donald Douglas, R-Nicholasville, told the committee that land acquisition delays slow down projects in his district.

“Could you give us an idea of sort of what percentage of the slowdown issue that might be, because I know in my district that’s a significant issue?” Douglas asked.

Hancock said right-of-way purchases are often a long, difficult process.

“We’re anxious to acquire the property to help move the project along, but the person that’s being affected has rights as well. And they quite often exercise those,” Hancock added. “As we work together to try to resolve those issues, sometimes that just takes longer than we would like. But at the end of the day, we’re abiding by all the rules governing right-of-way acquisition.”

Hancock said when lawmakers do hear about a project moving quickly, it’s usually because the right-of-way acquisition process or the utility relocation phase moved quicker than anticipated.

## Performance review data shared with education committee

*by Nancy Royden - LRC Public Information*

FRANKFORT — Lawmakers on the Interim Joint Committee on Education heard from Kentucky’s auditor of public accounts on Aug. 18 about performance data from a recent Kentucky Department of Education review

The 556-page report stems from a measure adopted in the 2024 legislative session. It called for a full fiscal controls and operational performance review of the KDE, spanning a four-year period from 2020 through 2024.

Auditor Allison Ball said the report is a product of “immense” work. Investigators looked at department operations, fiscal information, department strategy and partnerships, state board oversight, academic standards and the model curriculum framework, interscholastic athletics, the Kentucky School for the Blind, and preschool, Ball said.

“It was very, very broad. It needed to be broad because the KDE is big. It does a lot. It’s just very vast, and as far as anyone in the auditor’s office can remember, this is the first time a comprehensive audit like this has ever been done on the KDE,” she said.

Ball said the timing of the examination is good

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Committee Co-Chair Sen. Stephen West, R-Paris, speaks during the Aug. 18 meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Education



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because the KDE is crafting a strategic plan and this will help the department's staff accomplish the planning in an effective way.

To complete the examination, Ball's staff conducted interviews, focus groups, surveys, school site visits, and benchmark comparisons against five peer states. Laws and regulations that impact the KDE were reviewed, and KDE leadership staff, superintendents and others offered input, Ball said.

Through the review, Ball said staff found the KDE lacks measurable benchmarks.

"And this is really, really important if you're going to increase proficiency scores. If you're going to tailor academic assessments for students, you need to have measurables. It's very common to see language like "improve" or "increase." And those are great words, but you need to have some measurable benchmarks in order to be able to figure out OK, are you meeting the goals that you need to meet?" she said.

Ball said the KDE could help improve the lives of students in several areas. Those include improved numeracy, additional school counselors and literacy coaches, enhanced suicide prevention efforts, efforts to ensure preschools are operating at the highest level possible, and efforts to curtail gang violence.

The auditor's staff also found that consistent and comprehensive reviews should be completed at school districts. Around 43% of school districts have not had a completed comprehensive on-site monitoring within the last 10 years, according to the presentation.

Committee Co-Chair Sen. Stephen West, R-Paris, asked if the audit identified glaring discrepancies in fiscal policy or spending.

Ball said investigators identified some problems with processes, but not in relation to expenditures themselves.

"We didn't find glaring problems. There was one area in particular that had to do with grants, that schools had to fill out some paperwork years and years and years ago. It had not been updated for a long period of time," she said.

"So, we don't know for certain if they still qualify for those kinds of grants. So, there were some issues like that. We did not find big ticket, glaring problems other than the SEEK funding."

Ball said the software used for tracking the budget could be improved.

Rep. Rachel Roarx, D-Louisville, said she has been working with Rep. Scott Sharp, R-Ashland, and the Engage and Empower Disability Caucus to spur resources for the Individualized Education Program (a collaborative document for special education services).

"Thank you for this report. I think it has definitely elevated a lot of really important needs and you've highlighted some of those, from the sexual assault prevention and awareness to our multilingual parents needing access to the special education dispute resolution forms as well as mental health," she said.

Rep. Emily Callaway, R-Louisville, said she would like to see much more attention given to career and technical education programs and area technology centers. She said funding is paramount.

"I do want to reiterate: I appreciate you drawing attention to CTE and the ATC and the fact that they are not included in the strategic plan. That is really disconcerting to me," she said.

Committee Co-Chair Rep. Scott Lewis, R-Hartford, thanked staff from the auditor's office for their presentation.

"That was a lot to digest, and we probably will have more questions and be in contact with you then," he said.





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# Committee Meetings

Minutes for Statutory Committees that met recently may be found at the following sites:

**Interim Joint Committee on Agriculture:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Ag/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Ag/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on Appropriations and Revenue:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/A&R/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/A&R/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on Banking and Insurance:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/B&I/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/B&I/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on Economic Development and Workforce Investment:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/EDWI/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/EDWI/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on Education:**

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**Interim Joint Committee on Families and Children:**

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**Interim Joint Committee on Judiciary:**

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**Interim Joint Committee on Licensing, Occupations, and Administrative Regulations:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/LO&AR/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/LO&AR/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on Local Government:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Loc\\_Gov/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Loc_Gov/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on Natural Resources and Energy:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/NR\\_&\\_E/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/NR_&_E/minutes_all.html)

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**Interim Joint Committee on Tourism, Small Business, and Information Technology:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/TSBIT/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/TSBIT/minutes_all.html)

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[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Trans/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Trans/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Vets/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Vets/minutes_all.html)

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2025 Interim

**LEGISLATIVE  
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