

Advisory Group – Meeting #6 Summary

Overview:

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) hosted the sixth U.S. 69 Expansion and Modernization Project Advisory Group Meeting virtually on May 4, 2021, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The objectives of the sixth meeting were to discuss the noise analysis steps; environmental justice and equity; traffic and revenue results; next steps in the Project; and to seek feedback from the Advisory Group.

Meeting Summary

1. The meeting and its contents are summarized in the attached:
 - a. Meeting PowerPoint
 - b. Meeting Recording
2. **Welcome and Meeting Logistics** – The meeting kicked off with a welcome and introduction by Michael DeMent, HNTB.
3. **Opening Remarks** – KDOT Deputy Secretary Lindsey Douglas provided opening remarks regarding topic areas and questions that KDOT has been hearing about the Project. The Team will provide revenue results and the path going forward for the decision on the Project. She thanked everyone for participating and being part of the conversation and expressing their feedback on the Project.
4. **Noise Analysis** – Cameron McGown, HNTB, discussed the noise analysis concerns. McGown discussed how the results of the noise analysis will be completed toward the end of summer 2021.
 - a. **What is Noise?** – 66 decibels (dB) is the average sound level where highway noise impacts may occur along a corridor. This sound level was established by FHWA and KDOT in their noise guidelines and policies.
 - b. **Noise Abatement Process & Criteria** – Noise abatement measures must be warranted (are sound levels are predicted to be above 66 dB?), feasible (is there a way to provide meaningful reduction in sound?) and reasonable (will they provide a good level of sound level at a reasonable cost?). A full noise analysis will be studied whether the express toll lanes (ETLs) or traditional widening solutions move forward. The analysis depends on the traffic, terrain, and design. Traditional widening has some cases where lanes are closer to properties and could have greater noise impacts.

Advisory Group Questions and Project Team Responses

Q: From my understanding, the dB scale is not linear therefore not twice as loud if it's twice the dBs?

A: That is correct. Noise levels are logarithmic not linear.

Q: How affective are noise walls?

A: They can be effective for the first row of homes/businesses immediately adjacent to noise walls. They can be less effective as you move further away from the wall or that abatement measure.

Q: What if the noise conversation is an influencer to what would be the best solution for the corridor?

A: It is possible to do a comparative analysis where you take both options through a similar analysis. One of the big factors that affects the noise levels is the distance of receptors from the roadway so the smaller footprint, the further you are away from the first row of adjacent homes/businesses. There are usually not drastic differences based on the alternatives. The traffic would have to be doubled to have a 3 dB increase. There might be some slight differences but keeping the footprint smaller is the qualitative way to look at it.

5. **Environmental Justice and Equity** – Cameron McGown, HNTB, discussed environmental justice and equity and how the Project team has reached out to diverse communities. Project improvements should provide fair and equal opportunities.

a. **Strategies KDOT Would Implement to Improve Social and Tolling Equity –**

- i. Use toll rates to maximize benefits, not profits
- ii. Improve speeds for all users
- iii. Minimize barriers/ easier for occasional users
 1. K-TAGs are free to acquire and KTA also partners with BancPass- a loadable toll card. This allows someone without a bank account or credit card to reload the BancPass with cash.
 2. Occasional users can use the lanes and be charged the toll via license plate toll. This allows for not using a pre-paid service or card. The toll bill would then be sent to the user's address.
- iv. Include transit options
 1. KDOT is committed to providing a rate structure to keep those prices low.
- v. Improve bike and pedestrian facilities
- vi. Implement sustainability strategies – smaller footprint for fewer impacts

b. **Additional Steps for Meaningful Mitigation** – The Team is identifying underserved communities and gathering social equity best practices regarding toll roads. Next steps are to quantify underserved community impacts and discuss potential range of environmental justice and equity strategies with communities of concern. The ETLs would not open until 2025. KDOT has time and opportunities to engage in a meaningful way to serve these communities.

Advisory Group Questions/ Comments and Project Team Responses

Comment: Carlos Gomez, Julie Brewer, and Keely Schneider extended partnerships on this effort with their respective organizations.

Q: Are we looking at a broader strategy for transit and to get through this corridor easily?

A: We have had some conversations with businesses along the corridor. A big part of that is this group and being involved with the Overland Park Chamber. If there are some business groups we need to engage with as this moves forward, we would like to talk with you about that. If ETLs is the decision that moves forward, there will be an extensive learning campaign.

Comment: RideKC is ramping up a new strategic plan and we're looking forward to continued discussions because the need to bring additional workforce to Johnson County is great.

Comment: Some of the owners from staffing agencies would be a great resource. They could get some good insight on the transportation needs. For underserved communities, the car might not be registered in their name and how the collection process will work for those that don't understand how it's working.

Comment: Thank you for addressing the environmental justice concerns. I think it will continue to be a conversation point but I think making the points you made - particularly that everyone benefits from this - will be important.

6. **Traffic and Revenue Results** – Cameron McGown, HNTB, discussed the results from the Traffic and Revenue study. The purpose of the tolls is not to make a profit or maximize revenue made from the ETLs. The tolls will generate revenue but that will count as the City's local contribution from the Project. It offers the community another way, besides raising taxes, to provide the contribution. We predict the rates will be below the national average and generate revenue to cover the local contribution.

a. **Projected Toll Revenue Differs Based on Growth** –The potential annual gross revenue using the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) forecast predicts generating \$12 million by 2050. The conservative growth model estimates a little over \$6 million in revenue by 2050. The slight decreases in 2040 is due to the City having plans to improve parallel arterial roads nearby to be opened in 2040.

b. **Toll Revenues Cover Operational Costs** – The gross revenue covers and is broken down into leakage costs, KTA transaction processing, toll system operations, and toll system maintenance. The left-over revenue is net revenue to pay for the local contribution. KDOT will maintain the roadway.

- c. **Projected Revenues Cover Costs** – Every year is predicted to have positive net revenue in both growth scenarios (MARC forecast and the conservative growth forecast).

Advisory Group Questions and Project Team Responses

Q: I may have missed this, but how are you preparing long range revenue and cost estimates? Based on inflation for both revenues and expenses?

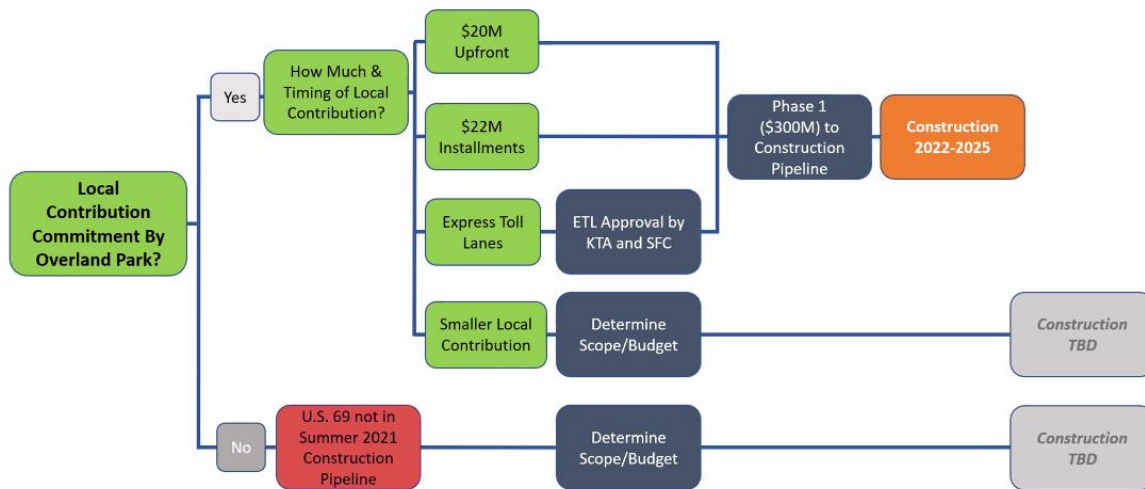
A: Inflation is taken into account on the revenue and the costs sides. On the revenue sides, the dollars brought in are driven by demand.

Q: Do toll rates go up every five or ten years?

A: There are two pieces to this. When the toll rates are set to cover the costs, it will go up slightly to cover that nominal amount. For the peak hours, those are driven by traffic demand. We do have projections as to what those rates look like 10, 15, 20 years down the road. That upper range is not increased by inflation but more by demand on the system.

- d. **Net Revenue Can Fund Local Contribution**– The MARC forecast predicts the local contribution being paid off by 2037 and the conservative forecast estimates 2042. This is for the first phase of the ETLs. Phase 2 is predicted to be implemented in 2040.
- e. **Potential Local Contribution with Both Alternatives** – KDOT Deputy Secretary Lindsey Douglas discussed the phases of project implementation for the traditional widening and ETL solution options. Example Project’s and intersection revenue calculations were presented to the group showing how the local contribution plays a part in the Project.
- f. **How Does Local Contribution Affect Scope and Schedule** – KDOT Deputy Secretary Lindsey Douglas discussed how the local contribution plays a role in the project and the schedule to get the project to construction (see *Figure 1* below).

Figure 1: U.S. 69 Local Contribution Process



Advisory Group Questions and Project Team Responses

Q: Is a \$20M/\$300M local/KDOT cost share a standard arrangement statewide to advance expansion projects?

A: Right now, KDOT has two communities that have committed to have a local contribution on a project in the same local contribution price range and overall project cost as U.S. 69. Around 7-10% of the overall project cost is what Overland Park has paid in the past for projects. If the City is around 7-10% of the project from local contribution, then KDOT feels like they're doing their due diligence to Overland Park taxpayers. It's an important consideration to review options for the local contribution sources. When KDOT looked at who uses the lanes on U.S 69, at least 50% or more of users are not from Overland Park or end their trip in Overland Park. These users can help contribute to the road via the tolled option.

g. **Express Lanes are the Best Value for KDOT** – This will be the recommendation to the City. An ETL would reduce congestion, improve trip reliability, have a smaller footprint, the traffic will be further away from homes/businesses, it has a lower construction cost, lower lifecycle/maintenance costs, and it provides new funding options for local partners. KDOT still has options available for traditional widening.

7. **Project Next Steps** – KDOT Deputy Secretary Lindsey Douglas overviewed the next steps in the Project. The next advisory group meeting is scheduled for later in the year. The decision/ recommendation period is from June 14 to June 25. Cameron McGown, HNTB, discussed the next round of surveys and focus groups taking place this month. This next round will be valuable to have since the Team now has more information and data about ETLs.

Attendees

A screenshot of attendance follows.

Julie Brewer

