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SW Kansas Chambers of Commerce Meet in Liberal to Discuss Highway Project
Over fifty people were in attendance on Thursday morning at the Depot in Liberal as the Southwest Kansas Chambers of Commerce hosted a presentation and discussion meeting concerning a new transportation bill. The SW Kansas Chambers of Commerce includes Dodge City, Garden City, Grant County, and Liberal.

Economic Lifelines who is a statewide coalition of organizations and community groups which provide grassroots support for Transportation Programs is helping with informing citizens along with the Kansas Transportation Online Community (KTOC) about implementing a new transportation bill.

Paul Joseph who is from Garden City is the President of the SW Kansas Chambers of Commerce opened up the event by introducing Pat Hurley who is an attorney and lobbyist for Economic Lifelines. Hurley gave one of two power points that were given during the meeting.

The first presentation included a three minute video which showed pictures and clips of many different highways in the state which are in poor shape.

The Kansas Transportation Link (T-Link) feels they have found a solution with bill HB 2650 which will span over ten years and cost $8.2 billion. T-Link says the state would need 11.5 billion to completely fix every highway that needs improvements. If the state were to just maintain status quo with the current highway conditions the cost would be $4 billion.

Economic Lifelines stressed that not only will this plan fix highways for much needed safety, but that it will also spark revenue to the state. T-Link projects that the state of Kansas will begin bringing in revenue by 2013 with the passage of this bill. The negative is before the revenue comes in the cost will be $250 million, which will have to come from a state budget that is already very strapped down.

The bill if passed will fund adding on to highways and improving the ones in bad shape. It will also funnel money to aviation and railroad. The new plan would create a .3% sales tax. T-Link says without the passage of the bill that the transportation department will have zero funding for any type of modernization or enhancement project. The group stressed that back in 1989 and 1999 that transportation programs were the single largest economic development in the state and that no other state program impacted the economy in a more positive way.

T-Link projects the ten year program would over time create 100,000 jobs, reduce local pressure to increase property taxes, and help communities grow and prosper.

The Economic Lifeline group urged citizens to contact your local legislature to urge them to support HB 2650. For more information visit www.economiclifelines.com.

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