



# HOUSING HIGHLIGHTS



2024 Legislature Week Nine

March 8, 2024

Volume 10 Issue 9

**Kansas Transportation Secretary Calvin Reed has announced that 58 projects at 37 airports** have been selected from the 135 Kansas Airport Improvement Program grant applications they received. Selected projects focus on pavement preservation, safety, and air ambulance accessibility. Local matching funds in various amounts depending on the project will be required, making the total KAIP project value more than \$34 million. A sampling of the recipients includes:

- Gove County Airport - \$142K to install an automated weather observing system.
- Rush County Airport - \$44K to do taxi lane pavement repairs.
- Stanton County Municipal Airport - \$144K to replace their automated weather observing system.
- Syracuse-Hamilton County Airport - \$23,850 for the crack seal of runway 13/31.
- Hugoton Municipal Airport - \$18K to improve their automated weather observing system and \$270K to repair pavement around the terminal and T-hangars.
- Satanta Municipal Airport - \$45K to drill a well to provide a water supply to the pilot lounge, hangars, and aerial applicators.
- Ulysses Airport - \$66,500 for the design and development of a fence project and \$337,500 for constructing that fence along the northwestern side of the airport.

**The Kansas Department of Transportation reports that plans are underway** to replace the failing Prairie Dog Creek bridge on Kansas Highway 383 in Norton County. Survey crews are contacting property owners near the bridge to inform them they will be taking measurements and may need access to their land. Funding for the rebuild comes from the bipartisan 10-year, \$10 billion Eisenhower Legacy Transportation Program. The new bridge is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2026.

**The Kansas Department of Transportation has announced a three-month pilot study** to explore replacing the current state fuel tax with a pay-per-mile road usage charge as a new way to fund roads and bridges. The research is utilizing federal grant money available to states specifically to consider potential alternative approaches to transportation funding. Scheduled to begin in April, KDOT is actively recruiting participants - who may earn a \$100 incentive - to take part in the study, especially rural Kansans.

**The Senate Committee on Education heard testimony on SB479 this week.** The legislation would afford Kansas teachers the opportunity to move into a retirement plan with better long-term benefits. The Kansas Association of School Boards spoke in favor of the bill, stating that members felt an improved retirement benefit would attract young people to the profession and encourage experienced teachers to remain in the classroom. The Kansas National Education Association also advocated for the legislation, noting their optimism that this adjustment will help reduce the state's critical teacher shortage. Currently, the Kansas State Department of Education is reporting 1,810 teacher vacancies.

**Kansas SB 365 failed in a vote of 18-22 this week.** The legislation sought to shorten advance election ballot deadlines, prevent mail-in ballots from being counted after polls close, ban all remote ballot drop boxes, and bar election officials from using machines to count ballots. Advocates claimed the bill would improve election integrity. At the same time, opponents thought it was excessive and defended the veracity of Kansas elections as historically secure and impeachable, thus making the bill pointless.

**The Kansas Department of Revenue has reported that total tax collections in February** were 6% below the projected estimate of \$554 million. However, corporate income tax payments were \$5.1 million more than anticipated. This was the fourth consecutive month that the state has fallen short of its projections, prompting Governor Kelly to once again call for a bipartisan tax cut package to protect the state's long-term economic growth and its ability to continue fully funding essential services.

**The House Committee on Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development heard testimony regarding HB 2766** this week. Introduced by House Majority Leader Chris Croft, the legislation would prohibit nonresident aliens, foreign businesses and corporations, and foreign governments from owning or leasing Kansas property within 150 miles of a military installation. Noted explicitly as "countries of concern" due to their adversarial relations with the United States were China, Cuba, Hong Kong, Iran, Macau, North Korea, Russia, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen.

**The House Committee on Welfare Reform is considering HB 2723,** which would provide \$40 million in grants to build or improve homeless shelters across the state. Communities would be required to enact local ordinances to ban homeless encampments to be eligible for this financial assistance and would need to provide matching funds. If approved, the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services would administer the program.

**A subcommittee of the Legislative Coordinating Council has named Shirley Morrow** the new acting director of the Kansas Legislative Research Department. Morrow will replace J.G. Scott, who is retiring on March 15th. Morrow, who holds a bachelor's degree in zoology from Fort Hays State University and a master's degree in environment science from Oklahoma State University, has been with the Legislature's research arm since 2010, most recently as their principal fiscal analyst.

**The 2024 Kansas Department of Health and Environment's Public Health Conference** was hosted by Wichita State University March 4th - 6th. More than 500 professionals from local health departments, public health nurses, maternal and child health staff, and other leaders from across the state were in attendance. The event included an address by Governor Kelly on the need for Medicaid expansion, 30 breakout sessions tackling issues like substance abuse, health equity, leadership, social determinants of health, public safety, and workforce development, and four visiting keynote speakers:

- Natalie Fikes of Atlanta, GA - bestselling author and performance/development coach
- Dr. Aditi Nerurkar of Boston, MA - Physician at Harvard Medical School and bestselling author
- Tony Martinez MD of Buffalo, NY - Associate Professor at the University of Buffalo's Jacobs School of Medicine and Director of Erie County Medical Center
- Ann Eisenberg JD of Pittsburgh PA - Professor at West Virginia University College of Law and Research Director, Center for Energy & Sustainable Development

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