

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**For more information:** Steve Hale, [Steve.hale@ks.gov](mailto:Steve.hale@ks.gov) , 785-217-5091

## **KDOT stopping work on U.S. 69 Crawford County Corridor western alignment; starting new corridor study later this year**

In response to feedback from communities and residents along U.S. 69 in Crawford County, the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) is stopping any further progress on developing the western alignment of the Crawford County Corridor (also known as the Pittsburg Bypass). This includes stopping design work and planned construction of the U.S. 160 improvements (Phase 3) of the Crawford County Corridor. That project would have extended U.S. 160 to the west along 590th Avenue.

Discussions about improving the U.S. 69 corridor have been happening for decades. The project would expand an 18-mile corridor of U.S. 69 to a four-lane freeway, starting at the Cherokee-Crawford county line and continuing north of the City of Arma.

Over time, KDOT has done preliminary engineering and environmental reviews, working with cities and counties along the U.S. 69 corridor. The last study on the project was completed in 2012, and at that time, the western alignment was presented as the preferred alternative. While there have been ongoing conversations through KDOT's Local Consult process and individual project meetings, until this spring, KDOT had not had a dedicated conversation with communities along the corridor about the project in more than 10 years.

In May, more than 350 people attended city council and county commission meetings where KDOT presented about the U.S. 69 Crawford County Corridor. The overwhelming majority of people KDOT heard from were opposed to the western alignment of the U.S. Crawford County Corridor. The most common reasons included:

- The cost of the project relative to its benefit to the community;
- The last study was completed in 2012, and there have been significant changes in development since that time;
- Impacts to homes; and
- The potential impact of a new bypass on towns and existing businesses in the area.

“We heard loud and clear the U.S. 69 corridor is a top priority for southeast Kansas,” said Greg Schieber, KDOT State Transportation Engineer. “We also heard things have changed since decisions were made more than a decade ago, and we need to step back and work with communities to find the right solution for the future of U.S. 69. Infrastructure improvements

are expensive, and we want to invest in projects that not only improve the state highway system, but also align with the needs and visions of Kansas communities.”

Later this year, KDOT will start a new corridor study to re-evaluate the current highway and identify the current and future needs of the communities along U.S. 69 in Crawford County. The study will include an updated traffic and safety analysis to help determine viable options to improve the Crawford County Corridor.

To help inform the study, KDOT will establish a stakeholder group composed of representatives of the cities, county, and businesses along the corridor to hear a variety of perspectives on the priorities in the region. The study will include a robust public outreach effort and multiple opportunities for public input. It will take 12-18 months to complete the new study.

At this year’s Local Consult meetings in October, KDOT will not list a specific U.S. 69 Crawford County Corridor project for discussion. At the last two rounds of Local Consult, KDOT heard from southeast Kansans that improvements to U.S. 69 in Crawford County are a priority. KDOT is actively taking steps, like this new corridor study, to address that priority. The study needs to be done so that KDOT can have projects for consideration at the next round of Local Consult meetings in 2025.

As more information about the study schedule and opportunities for input are available, KDOT will post information online at:

<https://www.ksdot.gov/us69crawfordcountycorridor.asp>.

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This information can be made available in alternative accessible formats upon request.

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