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## NEWS RELEASE

Kansas Department of Transportation News Release

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### **KDOT Shifts Alignment for US-77 Big Blue River Bridge Replacement Project**

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) has shifted the alignment of the proposed US-77 bridge over the Big Blue River in Blue Rapids after consideration of local concerns and a review of project plans.

KDOT staff decided to move the alignment to broaden the curve on the approach from the north after hearing from local residents at a public meeting earlier this month. And, KDOT agreed to review the prevailing traffic speeds just west of the bridge on US-77 – also a citizen concern.

“Local input is an important part of how we do business,” said District Engineer Clay Adams. “We had a good discussion with area residents at the public meeting and I’m pleased we could responsibly shift the alignment in a way that addressed local concerns.”

In early February 2009, KDOT staff hosted a public exhibit to present design plans and answer questions on the bridge replacement project. Plans presented at the event showed the replacement of the existing bridge, built in 1950, with a new wider bridge that would be constructed approximately 100 feet upstream of the current bridge.

KDOT staff attended a public meeting on the project hosted by the Blue Rapids community in early August. During the meeting, KDOT staff discussed the bridge replacement project with local citizens and listened to concerns regarding the existing bridge, US-77 roadway, adjacent US-77/K-9 intersection, as well as the final alignment that was selected for the bridge replacement. In attendance at the public meeting were local citizens, media representatives, city/county staff, as well as Kansas Sen. Mark Taddiken and Kansas Rep. Sharon Schwartz. Concerns expressed at the meeting included the potential sharpness of the US-77 curve for the proposed new alignment, sight distance and speed limit issues, and turning movements at the US-77/K-9 intersection.

After further discussion with Sen. Taddiken and Rep. Schwartz based upon comments and concerns presented at the public meeting, KDOT staff conducted another review of the project plans. Upon completion of the review, KDOT staff decided to move the alignment from the upstream side of the existing bridge to the downstream side of the bridge. Also, KDOT engineering staff will conduct a speed study on US-77 just east of the existing bridge.

“I am pleased that the local citizens of Blue Rapids felt strongly enough to express their concerns about the bridge replacement project and that KDOT is now responding to those citizen’s concerns,” stated Sen. Taddiken. “The Big Blue River bridge replacement will be a beneficial improvement project for the entire community.”

Rep. Schwartz also applauded the effort of the local community’s request to discuss their concerns with KDOT. “We appreciate the time that both the citizens and KDOT gave at this public meeting,” stated Rep. Schwartz. “This provides a great example of how community meetings can work, and by working together, we can create a positive outcome.”

KDOT has allocated \$13.7 million to build the bridge; however, construction for the project is contingent on funding available at the time of the bid opening. Bid opening is tentatively scheduled for mid- to late 2011 and construction could start as early as spring 2012. The bridge project is tentatively scheduled to be completed in 2013.

For more information on this bridge replacement project, please contact Kimberly Qualls, Northeast Kansas Public Affairs Manager, at (785) 640-9340.

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