

RESOLUTION NO. 111313-5

A RESOLUTION APPROVING A COMMISSION LETTER TO THE KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION EXPRESSING DISSATISFACTION WITH THE CONSTRUCTION AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE INTERSTATE 70 PROJECT AND ITS ADVERSE IMPACT ON ABILENE BUSINESSES

WHEREAS, the Kansas Department of Transportation commenced a reconstruction project of Interstate 70 through Dickinson County, Kansas;

WHEREAS, the City understands the need to maintain critical public infrastructure, but in a manner that minimizes the economic impact to a community;

WHEREAS, during the construction the eastbound lanes of Exit 275 were closed for a lengthy duration causing significant economic hardship to the Abilene business community;

WHEREAS, the City of Abilene estimates that Abilene businesses experienced a \$9 to \$12 million loss in gross revenues during the construction; and

WHEREAS, KDOT plans to do construction on the westbound lanes of Interstate 70 in 2014 which could cause additional economic hardship for Abilene businesses unless the construction plan is modified.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the City Commission of the City of Abilene, approves a letter to be sent to the Kansas Department of Transportation and state elected officials expressing dissatisfaction with the construction plan for the Interstate 70 Project as provided in **Exhibit A**.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City of Abilene requests KDOT consider taking certain actions that would facilitate commerce in Abilene so as to minimize the effects of next year's temporary closure of westbound traffic at Exit 275.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Governing Body of the City of Abilene, Kansas, this 13th day of November, 2013.



ATTEST:


Penny Soukup, CMC

City Clerk

CITY OF ABILENE, KANSAS

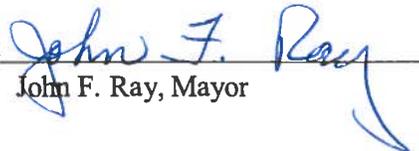
By: 
John F. Ray, Mayor

EXHIBIT A

Commission Letter

to the

Kansas Department of Transportation

concerning the

Interstate 70 Construction Project

City of Abilene, Kansas

November 13, 2013



Dwight D. Eisenhower Municipal Building
419 N. Broadway Street, PO Box 519
Abilene, KS 67410
www.abilenecityhall.com
Phone: (785) 263-2550
Fax: (785) 263-2552

November 14, 2013

Kansas Department of Transportation
Dwight D. Eisenhower Office Building
700 SW Harrison Street
Topeka, KS 66603-3754

RE: Interstate 70 Exit 275 Closure

Secretary King:

The purpose of this letter is to express the City of Abilene's dissatisfaction with the management of KDOT's Interstate 70 Project through Dickinson County, especially as it relates to the closure of Exit 275 into the City of Abilene.

The City Manager was informed of the closure of Exit 275 only several days prior to its closure. The notification provided the City with no time to prepare a proactive response to encourage travelers to visit Abilene via other routes. Initially, the City was informed that Exit 275 would be closed for about three to four weeks. This was later adjusted to six to eight weeks. As of the date on this letter, the entrance and exit ramps are still closed and KDOT projects the opening at about thirteen weeks.

The City did install unofficial detour signs directing travelers to Exit 272 for Abilene business as KDOT would not do so even though Exit 275 would be closed for a considerable period of time. The local detour signage was insufficient to help Abilene businesses during the construction project and would have been better if larger, more visible signage had also been installed by KDOT several miles in advance of the Exit 272.

Additionally, KDOT's policy to not detour travelers onto local roads created a situation whereby travelers would have to drive two miles past Abilene before being redirected back to Abilene by way of westbound I-70. Needless to say, many travelers will not elect to take a detour that takes them past Abilene only to doubleback to visit Abilene. Most will continue on their way because of convenience.

While the City appreciates KDOT's rationale for not detouring to local roads, the decision to do so was at a significant cost to Abilene's businesses. The City estimates a loss of between \$9 and \$12 million in gross revenue for Abilene businesses during the closure of Exit 275.



On behalf of the City's business community, the City requests KDOT's prudent consideration when constructing the westbound lanes of the Interstate 70 project. Ideally, KDOT would require the contractor to keep the westbound entrance/exit ramp at Exit 275 open for as long as possible and to have it rebuilt as quickly as possible to allow traffic into Abilene to be disrupted for a minimal amount of time.

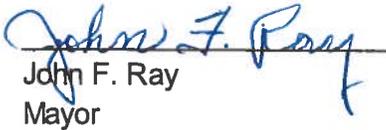
Additionally, KDOT could provide detour and informational signage ahead of the construction zone to direct travelers to Abilene instead of passing this responsibility to the City of Abilene and its businesses. Billboards throughout the State of Kansas would also be greatly appreciated.

If KDOT does not provide some relief to Abilene during the westbound phase of the Interstate 70 project, Abilene businesses will stand to lose an additional \$9 to \$12 million in gross revenue next year. Two years of such a significant decrease in gross revenue will have a detrimental effect on many small businesses in Abilene.

The City of Abilene, as home to one of the State of Kansas' greatest treasures, deserves to have a convenient and accessible gateway into the community at all times. President Eisenhower, after all, was responsible for the legislation that would establish the Interstate Highway System as we know it today. The Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum and Boyhood Home is paramount to Abilene, but also critically important to the State of Kansas. Between 100,000 to 125,000 visitors come to the Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum and Boyhood Home each year, and these visitors contribute significantly to Abilene's economy.

Construction is never convenient but is a necessary component to the great transportation system that President Eisenhower was instrumental in creating. The implementation and administration of the project, thus far, has been less than ideal. On behalf of the City of Abilene, please consider ways to better implement the construction project for next year.

Sincerely,


John F. Ray
Mayor


Angela Casteel
Vice Mayor


Kari Payne
City Commissioner


Dennis Weishaar
City Commissioner


Brenda Finn-Bowers
City Commissioner

CC: Governor Brownback
Representative John Barker
Senator Tom Arpke
Abilene City Commission
Dickinson County Commission
Abilene Area Chamber of Commerce
Abilene Reflector-Chronicle

