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## **Retooled KDOT program focuses on economic opportunities**

A retooled Kansas Department of Transportation program designed to bring new jobs to Kansas and increase capital investment is now “open for business.”

KDOT’s Economic Development Set-Aside Program was significantly enhanced under the state’s transportation program T-WORKS. Passed by the Kansas Legislature last May, T-WORKS boosts funding and expands the scope of the program to include rail, aviation and transit projects as well as highway projects. In addition, an Economic Development Advisory Panel has been formed to review project applications.

“During discussion with hundreds of Kansans in dozens of cities over the last three years, we were told that communities needed a state economic development program that was more flexible, more responsive and more strategic than what we had,” said Transportation Secretary Deb Miller.

“So we retooled our program and made some important changes.”

In addition to expanding the program to all transportation modes, changes include:

- Use of an economic modeling tool called TREDIS to better project a project’s economic impact. This allows for more strategic decision-making.
- An increase in funding to \$10 million a year.

- Addition of an immediate opportunity component that allows KDOT to make funding decisions quickly when a community has a narrow time frame in which to act on an economic opportunity.
- Creation of the Economic Development Advisory Panel, which will to review applications and provide guidance in the selection process. Members of the panel include Secretary Miller, Kansas Commerce Secretary Pat George, KDOT Deputy Secretary for Engineering/State Transportation Engineer Jerry Younger, former Speaker of the Kansas House Kent Glasscock and Tim Witsman, president of the Wichita Independent Business Association. Glasscock is the executive director of the National Institute for Strategic Technology Acquisition and Commercialization. He is also chairman and CEO of the family retail lumber and construction businesses. Witsman, who was the first county administrator for Sedgwick County, served as president of the Wichita Area Chamber of Commerce for 15½ years.

“One of the first questions a business must answer before expanding or moving to Kansas is whether there is adequate transportation infrastructure to support its plans. The Economic Development Set-Aside Program will make it much easier to say ‘yes,’” said Secretary George.

Secretaries George and Miller and Deputy Secretary Younger are standing appointments to the panel and the latter two are selected by the secretaries of Transportation and Commerce.

For more information about the program, visit [www.ksdot.org/tworks/ecodevo](http://www.ksdot.org/tworks/ecodevo).

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