Connecting Kansas: Broadband Initiatives

By Bruce Chladny, Executive Director

Over the past several months, the KAC has offered testimony in support of funding statewide broadband initiatives. The most recent being a July 31 piece submitted to the Joint Committee on the Budget in support of asking for $100 million instead of the $60 million being proposed by the Strengthening People and Revitalizing Kansas (SPARK) Committee in the Office of Recovery as part of its Phase 2 spending plan of the CARES Act funds program. We supported the monies being used for a competitive grant program in which all broadband providers would have been eligible to compete. The project criteria would consider many factors and needed to be open to urban and rural areas alike. It was a bold ask to invest $100 million in Kansas broadband, but this was probably the only time the state would have the money and could accomplish it as part of the COVID-19 response efforts (i.e. for public health, education, economic development, and more). The committee ended up approving the original $60 million ask.

According to a June 19, 2020 article: The State of Broadband in Kansas, 2020, written by the BroadbandNow team: “Kansas is the 28th most-connected state in the U.S. when it comes to broadband access.” This ranking is based on a couple of different data sources. The first being speed testing. According to user speed tests, Kansans experience average download speeds of about 135.9 Mbps which is well above the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) minimum required download speed of 25 Mbps. While high percentages of the population in many of Kansas’ counties have access to 25 Mbps wired broadband Internet services, a handful of counties have less than 50 percent access to the same services, and one county in the southwest part of the state has no access at this time according to the article.

The second data source is affordable access to an Internet connection. As a testament to what many of you with limited or no broadband probably experience, the article goes on to report: “In Kansas, there are 226 wired Internet providers, however, 173,000
people in Kansas do not currently have any wired broadband services available at their place of residence. Statistics reveal that 88.3 percent of Kansans have access to broadband speeds of 25 Mbps or faster, but 307,000 residents do not have access to a connection capable of these speeds. Another 344,000 people only have one wired provider offering services at their location, which limits their choices in Internet plans and means they have no option to switch, should they become dissatisfied with their current provider.”

To help address these access and speed inequities, The Kansas Office of Broadband Development was created to lead a statewide effort to expand broadband coverage and capacity for all Kansans. Access to affordable quality service is critical to advancing economic growth and competitiveness. Stanley Adams, Director of Broadband Initiatives, spoke on the July 29, 2020 Zoom webinar (17:00 minute mark) about the various ways decision makers might invest CARES Act funds in local communities. He explained the current situation. He spoke about various short-term opportunities that yield long-term payouts. He gave suggestions about what can be done at the local level.

To aid in this endeavor, the National Association of Counties (NACo) has partnered with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP), the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), and Farm Credit to develop a mobile app designed to identify and document areas with low or no connectivity. The iOS/Android mobile app called “TestIT” is a broadband sampling tool that aggregates download and upload speeds across the country from app users. With the press of a single button, users can test broadband speeds at any location in the state or country. The app sends the test results and location coordinates to a central database. It then compares those speeds to the national average and minimum standards established by the Federal Communications System. No personal information is collected, and the app is free to download and use. For more information go to: https://www.naco.org/resources/testit. This is a great way to help build the database of broadband availability in your area.

“We have reached a point in history where broadband availability is not only critical, but necessary for growth and to save lives,” writes Jay Hall, KAC Legislative Policy Director and General Counsel, in his testimony in support of HB 2618, which would have created a grant program for the deployment of broadband. “Without high speed Internet availability, some businesses may not be able to locate in certain communities. Likewise, residents may not be able to remain in those communities if Internet access is necessary for their jobs or education,” he adds. As we enter the spending portion of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the CARES Act funding programs, many of you have included broadband access initiatives in your plans. I would ask that if you are one of those counties, please reach out to me and let me know what you are doing. I would appreciate being in the loop to know what is going on across the state and stay connected so that when life returns to “normal,” KAC can resume work on this and other important initiatives. ■
T here is no doubt that 2020 will go down as one of the most unusual years ever, and one that we will not soon forget. The economic and humanitarian impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic have been felt far and wide across our state, our Nation, and our world. Practically every aspect of our daily lives has been adjusted in some way to fit the new norm we now experience due to COVID-19 impacts.

As you think about this most unusual year, what are some of the steps or actions that KAC has taken that have made a positive difference for you or your county? Please share your thoughts via email with me at: chipw58@cox.net. Thank you!
Wind Energy and Local Development
Get Your Questions Answered!

Free Virtual Workshops for County Officials
Workshop support provided by the Kansas Department of Commerce

Speakers:
Mike Bush, WSU Center for Economics Research
Bruce Chladny, KS Association of Counties
Zac Eddy, KS Dept. of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism
Jessica Lucas, Clean Energy Business Council
Amanda Miller, Olsson
Josh Svatey, Advanced Power Alliance
Randi Tveitaraas-Jack, KS Dept. of Commerce

RSVP to Beth Pauley
bit.ly/WindWorkshop2020
pauley@climateandenergy.org
402-469-4091

Explore Wind Energy

Questions about wind energy? We have answers!
Learn about wind energy and its impacts on economic development, wildlife, health, and safety in Kansas. Plus, network with other elected officials from across the state at this FREE virtual workshop.

Choose the date that works for you. Four convenient options!
Tuesday, Sept. 15, 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Wednesday, Sept. 23, 9 a.m. - Noon
Tuesday, Oct. 20, 9 a.m. - Noon
Tuesday, Nov. 17, 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.

RSVP to Beth Pauley
bit.ly/WindWorkshop2020
pauley@climateandenergy.org
402-469-4091
KAC is offering the following upcoming Wednesday webinars in September. To register for the webinar, please contact your local county webinar administrator or email Kimberly Qualls at qualls@kansascounties.org. Once your registration is completed, you will receive an email confirmation with connection information for the webinar.

**Kansas Healthy Food Initiative**

*September 23, 2020, Wednesday, 10 a.m.-11 a.m.*
*Instructor: Rial Carver, Program Manager, Kansas Healthy Food Initiative*

Kansas Healthy Food Initiative (KHFI), housed in the Center for Engagement and Community Development at K-State, has funding and technical assistance for communities who are seeking to retain or start grocery stores. The KHFI has provided technical assistance to around fifty counties and funded 14 projects in 12 counties. The program works to bridge informational and financing gaps faced by healthy food stakeholders and food retailers operating in low- to moderate-income areas. Please join us to learn more about how this program can benefit the residents in your county.

The 2020 Census will direct over $6 billion every year to Kansas counties based on how many residents fill out the form. If your residents do not complete the census, your county will get less money. After COVID-19, we cannot be left with underfunded schools, hospitals, and safety net programs. Completing the 2020 Census ensures our counties get our fair share—the resources we will need to truly recover. Please be sure that all your county residents complete the 2020 Census today at: [https://my2020census.gov/](https://my2020census.gov/). Let’s ensure we get the resources we need to truly recover.

#KansasCounts
Below you will find the agenda, dates, and times for the 2020 KAC Virtual Conference Event scheduled for Tuesday-Wednesday, October 13-14, 2020. All agenda sessions will take place virtually via Zoom. To register for the 2020 KAC Virtual Conference Event, click here. Once you have submitted your registration, you will receive a confirmation email that will include the Zoom connection information specific to each day’s session. There is no registration fee for this year’s virtual conference event. Registration Deadline: Friday, October 9, 2020.

**Tuesday, October 13, 2020**

10 a.m.-11 a.m. 2021 Legislative Policy Statement Review

**Wednesday, October 14, 2020**

9-9:30 a.m. Kansas Governor Laura Kelly

9:30 a.m.-10:45 a.m. KAC Annual Business Meeting

Call to Order: KAC President Chip Westfall, presiding
- Membership will vote to adopt the 2021 Legislative Policy Statement
- Executive Director “State of the Association” and announcements about upcoming 2021 KAC programs and services
- KAC 2021 Annual Conference Key Speaker Video

10:45-11 a.m. ACEC 59th Annual County Public Improvement Awards

Sponsored by the American Council of Engineering Companies, in cooperation with KAC, this awards presentation recognizes engineering projects benefiting citizens of Kansas communities. Joe Drimmel, ACEC Board President, will present the awards.

11-11:20 a.m. NACo Overview, Matt Chase, NACo Executive Director

11:20-11:35 a.m. NACo Works for You, Kim Hall, NACo Membership

11:35-11:45 a.m. Morning Wrap Up & Upcoming Afternoon Events

11:45 a.m.-1 p.m. Lunch Break

1-2 p.m. Kansas Transportation Secretary Julie Lorenz

2-3 p.m. Kansas Commerce Secretary David Toland

3-4:30 p.m. KCAMP/KWORCC Business Meeting
realize that 2020 is not nearly over. We are still surrounded by the challenges of COVID-19, Election Day is two months away and everyone is searching for a “new normal.” Despite that, some attention has to be given to the future, as it will be here before we know it.

As of the time of this writing, we do not know how the 2021 legislative session will proceed. As of the time of this writing, we do not even know everyone who will be in the 2021 legislature. Nonetheless, we must prepare for a legislative session that may not look like what we are accustomed to. We must also prepare to serve our own local constituents in the event that COVID-19 surges as fall turns to winter.

The answer to the unpredictable is preparation. To that end, I offer the following tips for elected officials, other county officers, and department heads.

1) Get the direct contact information for legislative candidates that represent your county. Right now, we do not know how much time legislators will spend in Topeka. Having direct contact information for your delegation will help you connect with them when they are not in Topeka.

2) Be prepared to be versatile. We may see more committee work done through technology. This may mean changes in traditional deadlines for submission of testimony and notifying committees of the intent to speak. KAC will work to keep everyone informed of any changes, but again, this may not look like other legislative sessions. We may also see the need to provide services locally in a different manner. Having the ability to be versatile will allow us to continue providing services without interruption.

3) Focus on communication. Communication is the core of everything that we do. As we move forward into 2021, we must work to make sure that everyone that you serve understands the work that you are doing.

We cannot control all of the things around us. However, we can control our preparation for those things. As we learn more, we can adjust our plans and preparation accordingly. Planning and preparing now for any scenario will leave us equipped to handle every scenario.

Election Day is two months away and everyone is searching for a “new normal.” Despite that, some attention has to be given to the future, as it will be here before we know it.
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Director of Department of Corrections – Finney County

The Finney County Director of Corrections is responsible to establish, direct, manage, and evaluate the adult and juvenile correctional services operated by Finney County to serve the 25th Judicial District Community. Coordinates all division services with other criminal justice and social service agencies. Supervises division deputy directors. Serves as the Finney County expert on community-based corrections and is under the general supervision of the County Administrator on matters of personnel, budget, and general operations. Master’s degree from an accredited college or university in Criminal Justice, Public Administration or related field. Transcript verifying education credits is required and five years of experience in criminal justice administration or community corrections with experience in administration or supervisory capacity. Job description and applications are available at www.finneycounty.org/jobs. Finney County is an EOE.

Director of Public Health – Reno County

Seeking a Director to oversee the operations of the Reno County Health Department. Preference will be given to a master’s degree from an accredited college or university in Public Health, Healthcare Administration or related health or administration field. An equivalent combination of experience, education, and training which provides the required knowledge, skills and abilities will be accepted. Minimum: Bachelor’s Degree from an accredited college or university in public administration, business administration or finance is required. Department Directors are required to live in, or relocate to Reno County. Hiring salary range will be determined based on qualifications. Visit our website at: www.renogov.org to apply and for more information regarding duties and expectations of the candidate. Applications accepted until position is filled. Reno County is an EEO employer. Contact renee.harris@renogov.org for more questions.

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Director of Code Services – Miami County

The Director of Code Services is responsible for the administration of the Code Services Department including all building, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical, fuel gas, fire, environmental and property maintenance codes adopted by the county. The position is responsible for the supervision of all employees within the Department. Works under limited supervision with work reviewed for results achieved. The Code Services Director issues citations and testifies in court as necessary for the building inspection and environmental code divisions. This is a supervisory position.

Graduation from an accredited college or university with major course work in architecture, engineering, construction management, environmental health or closely related fields or any combination of education and experience that will provide the skills and knowledge necessary to perform the job duties. ICC certification preferred.

The position is located in Paola, KS, which is located just south of Johnson County, Kansas. Miami County is beautiful with wide open spaces, lakes, cider mill, vineyards, shopping, and much more.

Excellent compensation package with hiring range starting at $50,752, depending on qualifications plus the following benefits!

Medical/Dental/Vision: 100% paid medical insurance for HDHP single coverage, 80% county-pd premium for PPO and family coverage on all plans.

Health Savings Account: County Annual Contribution: $2,165 single, $3,710.64 family.

County paid $30,000 life insurance for employee.

Holidays/Vacation/Sick: 11 pd holidays/year, 96 hours vacation/year, 96 hours sick leave/year.

KPERS retirement.

For more information and application – www.miamicountyks.org/-job postings.


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EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Job Posting Closes Oct. 1, 2020 or Until Position is Filled

Local Road Engineer Contractor
Topeka, Kansas

The Kansas Association of Counties (KAC) is seeking a Local Road Engineer. The position will be an independent contractor to KAC rather than an employee. The KAC is a quasi-public agency which seeks to advance the public interest by promoting effective, responsive county government in Kansas. Founded in 1975 as an instrumentality of its member counties, the Association serves county governments through legislative representation, technical assistance, leadership and professional education.

Position Summary:
The Local Road Engineer serves as a county representative to coordinate county road issues at the state level, enhance communications between counties and public agencies, and serves as a resource person on road items. This position works predominantly on road and bridge issues. This incumbent is a resource for many County issues for transportation and outside of transportation as well. These include, but are not limited to issues such as solid waste, organizational structure, position descriptions, and public relations. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions. Office space will be provided at the KAC office in Topeka. It is anticipated that much of the duties will be performed from home or in the field. Usually expect one day in the office and as required for additional meetings. Driver’s License required due to traveling.

Essential Functions
The services are broken into major divisions.

- Mass Communications:
  - Twice Monthly emails on road news and issues to all the county road departments.
  - On the Road article for the monthly County Comment.
  - Speaks at the 6 district highway officials’ meetings in the spring.
  - Speaks at the KCHA Spring Meeting.
  - Speaks at the KAC Fall Conference.
  - Speaks at 10-15 county/township meetings.

- Inquiries:
  Answers specific questions about county road-related matters. Inquires come from Counties, KDOT and other state agencies, legislators, legislative research, trade groups, and citizens.

- KDOT-County Coordination:
  Position is an important unofficial interface between the counties and KDOT, which has promoted understanding and a good working relationship. Assists in making sure counties received and understand official notices from KDOT, such as BLP memos, and call for projects. Assist in explaining to counties controversial policy changes. Consult with KDOT staff on county perspective of proposed policy changes. KDOT personnel regularly inquire about county road matters, who to contact, how to get information to counties, why things are done a particular way, and ways to cooperate.
• State and Federal Agencies: Represent the counties’ interests and enhance communications and understanding with federal and state agencies.
  o Work with agencies on the development of regulations
  o Comment on proposed regulations
  o Answer questions about general issues with counties and inform counties of agency concerns
  o Assist in informing counties of issues and new regulations
  o Corps of Engineers -Quarterly Water Quality Group

• Local Agencies and Organizations:
  o KCHA Executive Board – non-voting
  o Member of KCHA Liaison Committee
  o Member of LTAP Advisory Committee
  o Member of Kansas Executive Safety Council
  o Member Kansas STIC committee
  o Member KTRAN advisory committee
  o Member Kansas Geologic Survey -State Map Committee

• Clearinghouse:
  o A resource center for counties on information related to current practices by counties; one place to call to find out what other counties are doing. Prepare state of the practice reports in major service areas so that all counties are aware of what other counties are doing (e.g., dust control, speed limits, stop signs, snow and ice control policies).
  o A resource for KDOT and Universities for input and information for any KTRAN projects related to the local road systems or local agencies.

• Templates:
  Prepare guides and procedures that counties can easily adapt to their specific circumstances. This may include complying with new regulations or dealing with major issues, such as utility accommodations, entrance permits, and permits for projects.

• Training: Work closely with Kansas University Transportation Center (KUTC) in training and technology transfer. Review technical articles prior to publication. Provide the counties information on complying with new regulations.

• Facilitate collection of local system data beyond bridge data
  o Assists KDOT in obtaining required information from Counties for annual County Engineer’s Report

Work Environment
This job operates in a professional office environment. This role routinely uses standard office equipment such as computers, phones, photocopiers, and filing cabinets.

Physical Demands
This requires the ability to lift and carry supplies, to load and unload supplies before and after meetings as needed. Similar lifting requirements will be necessary during KAC events.

Position Type and Expected Hours of Work
Contractor – $80,000 - $87,000 Up to 1,664 Hours Annually
Travel
There are frequent travel requirements for this position with overnight obligations. During KAC’s annual conference in the fall, all employees must be available for the entirety of the conference. This is typically a four-day event, though there may be other times when travel with a hotel stay will be necessary.

Required Education and Experience
1. Baccalaureate Degree in Engineering.
2. Professional Engineer License in Kansas.
3. Five years of road and bridge experience preferably for a local government in Kansas.

Preferred Education and Experience
Road management experience with a county government as county engineer, public works director or assistant engineer related.

Licensing & Certification
Incumbent is required to have and maintain a valid driver's license for use of personal vehicle. Standard mileage reimbursement for travel.

Other Duties
Please note this job description is not a comprehensive listing of activities, duties or responsibilities that are required of the employee for this job. Duties, responsibilities and activities may change at any time with or without notice.

This job description is a summary of typical functions of the job, not an exhaustive or comprehensive list of all possible job responsibilities, tasks, and duties. The Local Road Engineer is responsible to the Kansas Association of Counties Executive Director.

Applications deadline and procedures:
Posting closes Oct 1, 2020 or Until Position is Filled
Apply by email to leal@kansascounties.org
Attach to the email in PDF format only the following 3 items:
1. Cover letter
2. Resume
3. 3 samples of written work
Help your residents save on everyday prescription, dental and health costs.

**Prescription Discounts** at more than 68,000 pharmacies nationwide.
- Free to residents – they can save an average of 24%* off retail prices

**Dental and Health Discounts** at a national network of providers.
- Low-fee programs save residents 15% to 50% on dental and health costs

The Live Healthy program is offered at no-cost to our member counties – and we’ll provide everything you need to market these savings to your residents, including:
- Customizable posters
- Customizable free prescription discount cards
- Dimensional counter display
- Press releases and more

Become a Live Healthy county – it’s free! Visit [www.naco.org/health](http://www.naco.org/health) or call toll-free 1-888-407-6226.

* Savings may vary by drug and by pharmacy.

The Live Healthy discount program is NOT insurance.

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