

Testimonial in Support of Naming a future interchange after Kris Norton as proposed in  
House Bill No. 2263

Submitted to the Kansas Senate Transportation Committee

by Howard Lubliner, Friend, Mentee, and Career Fan of Kris Norton

February 26, 2025

Chairperson Sen. Petersen and esteemed members of the Kansas Senate Transportation Committee,

Our efforts to create a memorial to Kris began as he was lying in Stormont Vail Hospital last year and it was clear that the stage four cancer he was suffering from was going to take him from his family, friends and colleagues far too soon. Kris was an incredible friend, mentor, and colleague in my life. Through the 25 years that I have known him, Kris has similarly been an engaged mentor and father figure to countless others preaching the value of civil service and guiding generations of thoughtful and compassionate transportation professionals.

Kris served the Kansas Department of Transportation in a diversity of roles. He served for 33 years including working courageously through his last couple of years pushing through the challenges of his declining health and continuous chemo and radiation therapy. Kris helped successfully deliver more than two billion dollars of projects that brought quality of life improvements to every corner of the State of Kansas. The projects ranged from small Wildlife and Parks road improvements to major freeway upgrades.

Kris's greatest joy in his work was meeting with the citizens mostly directly impacted by these projects. He was approachable and empathetic to their concerns and worked diligently to implement project solutions that met the project need while addressing the concerns of those citizens most impacted. In all my dealings with Kris and the public – from impacted family, to farmer, to business owner – the citizens always left feeling better than when we started. And many of those citizens enjoy their infrastructure improvements more now for the solutions Kris was able to bring.

Kris was also an incredible ambassador for his profession. His charisma and thoughtfulness made him beloved by his coworkers and private sector colleagues alike. The dozens of individuals and firms who contributed to the fund necessary to pay for the memorial signs is a testament of those Kris touched over his career. One of his proudest accomplishments in his career was as the first office leader of KDOT's Lawrence office. Kris created a welcoming and collaborative environment that improved both hiring and retention rates. The office was so successful that it expanded twice during Kris's oversight with a waitlist of people hoping to join the office if and when space opened.

Kris was also a strong supporter of local businesses and charities. We would walk into West Coast Saloon or Little Saigon Café near our office for lunch and the owners would beam their welcome to Kris. His special lunch of seafood pho with extra onions was so unique that when calling in a takeout order the owner already knew the order was for Kris before I ever mentioned his name. Kris

was also a regular driver for Meals on Wheels until his health and frequency of doctors' appointments prevented him from serving. He would always pick up extra shifts when the program coordinator called because a driver had canceled. Kris took time to get to know the names and back stories of all the people to whom he delivered meals. His passion for the history of our armed forces meant that if there was a veteran on his route, we knew to expect Kris back 30 minutes late because he would always enter prolonged conversations with veterans to learn the details of their service.

There is no more appropriate way to celebrate and memorialize Kris's life than with the proposed interchange at K-10 and Wakarusa Drive. The unconventional interchange type, known as the "Norton Special" to the project team, was a solution that Kris derived in response to citizens' access concerns with initial interchange concepts. Kris lived in a neighborhood immediately adjacent to the interchange, and after the "Norton Special" interchange concept was unveiled at a public meeting some citizens who knew Kris made it a point to go by his house and thank him. Kris also dearly loved to play softball at the sports complex to which the interchange provides access. He never excelled at the sport but loved the competition on the diamond and comradery of tailgating in the parking lot after a game. Even after Kris's declining health wouldn't allow him to play anymore, he would coach third base or keep score in the dugout.

I respectfully urge the committee to approve this request for this memorial. It is inspiring to see all the people who have come together to raise the necessary funds and bring this bill to consideration. Its approval will be a strong show of support for a passionate public servant and pillar of our transportation engineering community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Howard Lubliner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Howard" being more prominent than the last name "Lubliner".

Howard Lubliner

Lawrence, Kansas Citizen