



Senate Utilities Committee

February 5, 2025

In support of SB 57

Megan Bottenberg, Director of Government Affairs
Cox Communications

Chairman and members of the Committee:

Cox Communications supports the passage of Senate Bill 57, which provides for reimbursement of the costs for relocation of lines for certain projects in the city, county and state right of ways.

Cox serves 119 communities across Kansas, the largest fiber-powered network in Kansas. Over the past five years we have spent our own private dollars to both expand broadband to unserved and underserved areas of the state and upgrade our infrastructure to provide multi-gig speeds to every residential customer in Kansas.

Like any business, and your individual households, we have a finite budget to spend on our network. In 2024, Cox spent over \$1.8 million in forced relocation of lines due to projects, \$1.454 million of that due to public works projects in municipalities we serve. That doesn't include the costs we absorb due to relocating our lines or damage to our facilities due to increased competition and activity.

Each line and user in the right of way should be treated the same; Cox pays franchise fees for access to the right of way, along with others in the right of way. But rarely are we ever reimbursed for the line relocation, even if it's for a beautification project, compared to others in the right of way.

As more beautification projects or road maintenance and upgrades occur, this will increase our costs just to do business, and we will eventually have to make tough decisions about where to spend those dollars. Every unreimbursed dollar we pay to relocate our facilities is a dollar we can't spend in extending broadband to unserved Kansans or could result in higher prices—but most of all, it could potentially broaden the digital divide. This bill would simply require the inclusion of these costs to be included in the overall project budget like any other cost.

Again, this bill is about parity, fair and equal treatment for all providers of services who use the right of way. We ask for your support of SB 57.