



February 4, 2025

Senator Mike Fagg  
Chair, Senate Committee on Utilities  
State Capitol  
300 SW 10th Ave  
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Senator Fagg and Members of the Senate Committee on Utilities,

Russell county wishes to express our concerns regarding the proposed changes to Senate Bill (SB) 57, which would require counties to reimburse costs associated with relocating utilities in public rights of way.

The proposed amendments present serious challenges and could have wide-ranging impacts for our county to include significant increased financial burdens and negative impacts on current or future public projects.

As is the case across Kansas, our county works under rigorous budget constraints. The language within SB 57 would require counties to bear the full cost of utility relocations, which would strain our already tight resources. This kind of mandate would almost certainly lead to increased taxes or reduced public services to meet these unexpected obligations, at a time when we are already trying to minimize those very issues.

In addition, these relocations are a common necessity during road and infrastructure improvements. If counties are responsible for all costs, essential public projects could face delays or cancellations. Russell county is about to begin a significant repair project on the Hell Creek Bridge at Wilson Lake and something like this would almost certainly slow down such vital infrastructure developments crucial for economic growth and citizen safety.

We urge the committee to reconsider these amendments to SB 57 and consider alternatives that would protect the fiscal health of Kansas counties. Utility companies already benefit from access to public rights of way, which are paid for and maintained by taxpayer dollars. The bill in its current form seems very one-sided and unbalanced for taxpayers to assume all costs.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns, we look forward to working together to find a balanced solution to the intended goals of the bill.

Respectfully,

Stephanie Grisham  
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