



# CONSTRUCTOR

■ The Voice of the Kansas City Construction Industry

■ FALL 2014



## Making a Better Manchester bridge

A number of major improvement projects are under way in the Metro, including the replacement of the 1950s era I-70 bridges over Manchester Trafficway and the Blue River in east Kansas City. Clarkson Construction is managing the \$63 million design/build project. Completion is slated for December 2015.

## City Public Works Director Points to Improvements but says More is Needed KCMO Citizens Unhappy with Street Upkeep

**T**axpayers and contractors, alike, were understandably disappointed by the recently released 2013-14 Kansas City, Mo. Citizen Satisfaction Survey, which showed that only 28 percent of residents expressed satisfaction with city street maintenance.

We wonder how this can be, when the city claims more money is being spent on streets?

Further confusing is the fact that this fiscal year's street preservation budget (including resurfacing, slurry seal and man-hole adjustments) amounts to only \$9 million, when voters were promised that \$14 million to \$15 million in annual overlay expenditures would result from the 2012 ballot on infrastructure reform and repair.

### Where did the money go?

To find out where the money promised is actually going, we contacted Sherri McIntyre, the city's public works director and assistant city manager.

McIntyre said the city also is not satisfied with a 28 percent citizen satisfaction rate on street maintenance. But she said 28 percent represents a significant improvement from 2008, when the citizen satisfaction score on street maintenance was a paltry 18 percent.

"We just had a staff meeting with the mayor and city manager this morning, and went over a lot of our statistics and our reviews," McIntyre said. "Certainly maintenance of streets is identified as a No. 1 priority of our



citizens. We're trending in the right direction, but those numbers are still numbers we're not satisfied with."

And one statistic doesn't tell the whole

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# MAKING IT BETTER

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Strong Demand Serves Contractor Well

# Kissick Construction Digs Deep to Find Success

Most of the publicity surrounding the downtown streetcar project involves the track and where it will go. But below the public's radar, crucial utilities work for the project is being performed by Kissick Construction Co.

"We're very involved in the streetcar project, in the installation and rehab of the sanitary sewer system, and some of the water lines as well," said Jim Kissick, president of the 20-year-old heavy civil construction company.

Kissick Construction also is playing a major role in Kansas City's massive, federally mandated sewer overhaul. Fortunately for Kissick, demand for below-the-ground projects has increased while other kinds of infrastructure projects have hit funding roadblocks.

"There are always articles about the dilapidated and extremely outdated water lines in Kansas City, Mo.," Kissick said. "The city is going through a process now of replacing 30 or 40 miles of that every year for the next five, six or seven years. And we're involved in that work. So there's definitely a market for the utility business right now, the sewer and water business."

Working underground requires one to expect the unexpected, Kissick said. "Virtually every time you put a bucket or shovel in the ground in downtown Kansas City you find a surprise, whether it be conduits that were installed or abandoned pipelines that there are no record of."

Kissick Construction also performs above-ground work. For example, it participated



in a Missouri Department of Transportation program to replace more than 550 bridges, a project that was completed a few years ago. Kissick built 10 of those bridges, mostly in rural areas of Cass County.

## Deep Roots

Kissick Construction Co. was founded in 1994 by Jim Kissick and Pete B. Browne,

who serves as vice president. But the company's roots extend back to 1896, when James H. Kissick started Kissick Transfer Co., an equipment hauling business in Kansas City.

Lloyd Kissick Sr., the grandfather of Jim Kissick, was a leader of Kansas City's

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## Years of Savings at KDOT Disappear in Budget Shuffles

# KDOT Project Costs Shifting Into Higher Gear

After Mike King was named Kansas Transportation Secretary in March 2012, he stated that significant savings were being achieved in the T-WORKS budget because KDOT had built-in higher cost estimates for many projects.

The savings have been significant indeed. KDOT reported in early September that bids coming in below estimates had produced a savings of \$311.2 million, or 11.16% of the T-WORKS budget, since the program began in 2010.

Unfortunately, this trend is coming to an end. “We are no longer consistently getting the low bids we were,” said Steve Swartz, KDOT’s chief of public affairs.

## Budgets and Costs Going Up

At least some of the savings have been channeled back into transportation projects. Swartz said KDOT has reduced the expected amount of bonding needed for T-WORKS by \$300 million. A \$10 million local bridge program was announced in June, and a new \$16 million interchange at U.S. 69 and 159th Street in Johnson County has been added to the T-WORKS projects list.

In August, KDOT announced \$1.2 billion worth of projects to improve Kansas roads and bridges, as well as create short- and long-term jobs. The work list includes 464 highway projects, 194 bridge/interchange projects and 1,603 miles of improvements.

“The construction work will create jobs for hundreds of workers, who will spend their paychecks in communities all over the state, spreading the benefits far beyond the construction industry,” King said in a news release. “But the better news is the long-term job prospects these improvements will help make possible.”

## Where’s the peanut?

But unfortunately, much of the savings from contracts coming in under bid have not gone back into transportation. Swartz noted that since T-WORKS was passed, the Legislature has approved transfers out of the state highway fund, the most recent being a total of \$300 million transferred in Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015.

The *Topeka Capital-Journal* reported in July that Gov. Sam Brownback has used a significant amount of those transferred funds to finance the state’s Medicaid



program, along with allocations of \$55 million yearly to the highway patrol and \$247 million that was diverted to public education over the past two years.

“What we have always told those who ask about our bid savings is that we are and have always been committed to delivering the \$7.8 billion T-WORKS program as promised and on time,” Swartz said. “Even with these transfers, the better-than-estimated bid prices along with other agency ‘belt tightening’ allows KDOT to deliver the T-WORKS program as promised.”

## ‘Bank of KDOT’

At the same time, the *Capital-Journal* reported that Kansas politicians and lobbyists sense that state revenue collections in coming months will signal whether state government leaders will dig more deeply into what is referred to by some as the “Bank of KDOT.”

Our association will be watching this situation very closely. For the benefit of our members, our employees and all Kansas residents, these “raids” on KDOT’s must end, whether construction bids come in low or not. ■

5, 4, 3, 2, 1 ...

## Say Goodbye to the Old Roe Bridge

As part of more major improvements to the busy 435 corridor in southern Johnson County, crews from Clarkson Construction this summer detonated sophisticated explosives to demolish the aging Roe Bridge structures, in order to make way for wider lanes and a new, "diverging diamond" interchange. Crews placed a bed of dirt under the bridges before the blast, to help protect the pavement on 435 below, so that the rubble could be cleared quickly and interruptions to traffic minimized.





## Street Maintenance

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story, McIntyre said. For example, she noted that the latest survey tallied citizen satisfaction with street maintenance in their own neighborhoods at nearly 40 percent.

Here are the latest numbers on Kansas City street preservation contracts. The numbers include resurfacing, slurry seal, crack seal, manhole adjustments, ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)-related ramp construction and pavement rejuvenation.

- 2014: About \$10 million
- 2013: About \$13 million
- 2012: About \$6.8 million
- 2011: About \$10.5 million

If you only include contracts for resurfacing, slurry seal and manhole adjustments for resurfacing, this year's street preservation contracts total about \$9 million. About \$1 million went for ADA-related ramp construction.

"Yes, we are spending some of our street resurfacing money on doing ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) curb ramps," McIntyre

said. "We have a settlement agreement with the Department of Justice that says any time you do maintenance on a street, all the ADA aspects should be brought up to standard."

### Promises, promises ...

So where is the rest of the funding the voters were promised?

"The money was to go to street maintenance, which includes things like preservation marking, signing, signals, bridge maintenance," McIntyre said. "If you include all those things, we are spending about \$14 million this year."

Looking at other areas of Kansas City's infrastructure budget, McIntyre said major projects the city hopes to undertake this year include reconstructing 20th Street west from McGee Street, and rebuilding the intersection of Blue Parkway and Eastwood Trafficway, which will include a bridge replacement.

### Tracking streetcar spending

Meantime, heavy constructors and other advocates of better basic transportation infrastructure are waiting to learn what the full impact will be of Kansas City voters'

rejection last August of an expanded streetcar taxing district. Specifically, we are watching to see what the city will do with money left over from recently cancelled contracts connected with the proposed Phase II of the streetcar system.

In May, the City Council approved contracts totaling more than \$8 million with HDR and Burns & McDonnell to do advanced engineering on potential streetcar expansions. HDR had a \$3.7 million contract to study routes on Independence Avenue and Linwood Boulevard. Burns & McDonnell had a \$4.4 million contract to study expansion on Main Street from Union Station to UMKC. The city sold bonds to pay for those contracts.

Prior to August, HDR incurred \$226,667 in expenses and Burns & McDonnell tallied \$835,166. For that spending, the two firms completed detailed route planning, environmental studies and some engineering and public outreach tasks.

McIntyre said the two contracts have been halted. "We do not expect any further expenses for the consultants to be incurred," she said. "The city is still evaluating on what to do with the remaining funds." ■



# MAKING IT BETTER

Want more information on our Association, members and issues?

Check out our website, **KCHeavyConstruction.org**. Regarding membership, contact Ed DeSoignie at (816) 753-6443

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Heavy Constructors Association  
of Greater Kansas City  
1100 Walnut, Suite 2950  
Kansas City, MO 64111

OUR INDUSTRY'S FUTURE DEPENDS ON IT.  
TAKE TIME TO VOTE NOV. 4th

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR: DEC. 11—HCAGKC CHRISTMAS PARTY AT THE DOWNTOWN MARRIOTT**

## Kissick Construction

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construction industry when he helped found the Heavy Constructors Association of Greater Kansas City in 1950 and served as the association's first president.

"So I have always had a near and dear

place in my heart for that association and for the value it brings to the table," Kissick said. "My philosophy has always been that individually, our company and my competitors don't have a very loud voice in this city. But together, through the Heavy Constructors Association, we have one of the loudest voices in the city."

Kissick noted that his middle son, David

Kissick, currently is the treasurer of the Heavy Constructors Association and "in approximately five years will climb the ladder to become president, which obviously for a dad will be a very proud moment." David will be the fourth generation of Kissicks to serve as an officer of the Heavy Constructors Association.

## Good Road Ahead

Amid strong demand for its services, Kissick employs nearly 300 people today.

But Kissick is not complacent. He hopes that the recently defeated streetcar expansion proposal will be resurrected at some point. And following the defeat of a Missouri sales tax to fund transportation infrastructure, he hopes that the state and federal governments will come up with other solutions.

"Our industry in general provides well-paying jobs for a lot of good workers," Kissick said. "And when our industry is suffering, families suffer all over the place."

But despite such concerns, Kissick is optimistic about the future of his company and the heavy construction industry. ■

