

Kansans invited to participate in transportation meeting

Hays will be one of eight locations in a series of regional meetings giving Kansans the opportunity to discuss their transportation priorities with members of Gov. Kathleen Sebelius’

transportation task force have been scheduled throughout the month of September. The consultation meeting in Hays begins at 8:30 a.m. Friday, Sept. 12, at the Holiday Inn and

Survey: Job losses coming

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Economic activity in the Midwest and Plains is still reflecting national troubles, showing weak growth and job losses, according to a survey of business executives released this week.

The August Mid-America report for the nine-state region said the overall economic index dipped to 51.4, down a tenth of a point from July. June’s index was 50.5.

The index ranges between 0 and 100. A score above 50 indicates a growing economy over the next three to six months.

“While the inflation gauge was down for the month, it is still telegraphing excessive inflation in the pipeline,” Creighton University economics professor Ernie Goss said.

The August employment index was 47.5, up from July’s 41.4.

Goss, the director of Creighton’s Economic Forecasting Group, oversees the survey.

It includes supply managers and business leaders in Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma and South Dakota.

Firms have increased production using fewer workers, said Goss, who expects unemployment rates to continue to rise for the region,

with significant variation across the nine states.

Despite the sobering figures, an index measuring economic optimism for the next six months jumped to 50.0 from July’s 37.8 and June’s 35.1.

A stronger dollar and downturns in commodity prices boosted the index, which was at its highest reading since last September, Goss said.

The prices-paid index, which tracks the cost of raw materials and supplies, dropped to 86.7 from July’s record high of 93.9.

Recent strengthening of the dollar has cooled inflationary pressures, he said, but it would take oil prices diving below \$100 a barrel for the nation to gain any material relief on the inflation front.

Goss said he expects signs of inflation, along with fears of damaging an already weak labor market, will prevent the Federal Reserve from reducing rates when it meets Tuesday, Sept. 16.

The Institute for Supply Management, formerly the Purchasing Management Association, began to formally survey its membership in 1931 to gauge business conditions. The Creighton Economic Forecasting Group uses the same methodology as the national survey.

Convention Center, 3603 Vine St. and will include regional discussions on highway and other modal needs (rail, aviation, transit, bike/pedestrian) in the morning, said Deb Miller, secretary of Kansas Department of Transportation.

In the afternoon, there will be an opportunity for communities to testify about their particular projects or concerns.

“It is important that the discussion at these meetings be elevated to the regional and state

levels,” Miller said.

“We will also have a conversation about how transportation should be paid for and what funding approaches Kansans will support.”

The meetings will be conducted by state transportation staff and include representatives of the governor’s task force — Transportation-Leveraging Investments in Kansas, also known as T-LINK.

Although the full 35-member task force, charged with devel-

oping a new strategic transportation approach for Kansas, will not be present at each meeting, a number of task force members will participate in each session.

The state’s transportation department also conducted a series of local consultation meetings two years ago to hear what types of projects were important to communities.

“It’s time to go back to communities to determine if any economic or transportation needs have changed in the last

two years and to continue discussions about regional priorities,” Miller said.

“Clearly, there will always be more needs than funding, so it’s important to think about how transportation investments best support statewide needs.”

Summaries of each local consultation meeting will be posted on the task force website: www.kansastlink.com.

The site also includes full summaries task force meetings, schedules and more.

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