

## Widening U.S. 36 would give counties big payoff

A study of widening U.S. 36 to four lanes by the Docking Institute for Public Affairs at Fort Hays State University shows what transportation activists have suspected for a long time:

Kansas, and particularly the 13 counties along the northern tier, stand to get a big payoff from the job.

The state would invest about \$1.4 billion to widen the road to a four-lane expressway from border to border. The 13 counties would reap benefits of nearly \$2.4 billion in the first 10 years, including \$1.4 during construction and \$1 billion from increased business, new motels and stores and tourism.

More importantly, 898 jobs would be created along the road as new or larger businesses feed on the increased traffic a four-lane road would bring. To an area of the state long accustomed to the economic doldrums, this could be a godsend.

The study bears out the fact that a better road would attract far more in business than it would cost to build.

Since the opening of Interstate 70 more than 40 years ago, only a handful of new motels have been built along U.S. 36 in Kansas. No truck stops. Few chain or local restaurants. Because the freeway sucked up all the cross-state traffic that once traveled U.S. 36, U.S. 24 and other roads west.

But many questions remain, including:

- Would traffic ever be heavy enough to justify a four-lane road?

Out here, right now, no. Back east, between Wamego and Troy, the road is busy enough today to need four lanes.

Illinois has an Interstate open to the Mississippi River, and Missouri will complete its four-lane road to the river at St. Joseph this summer. Then more traffic will start to flow west.

And federal projections show truck traffic across Missouri at 10 to 20 times today's.

Congestion in Kansas City and Omaha will send drivers around, not through, these cities, and U.S. 36 offers a fast, straight, attractive route west.

- Will we ever see a four-lane road in western Kansas?

Someday, maybe 20 years from now, maybe longer, traffic will build. In the meantime, the U.S. 36 Highway Association, which paid for the Docking study with help from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation and county commissioners along the road, supports a better two-lane road all across the state.

- Will Colorado ever improve its part of the road, more than 125 miles between the state line and I-70 at Byers?

Not any time soon. But just as Kansas will have to respond to a four-lane path across Illinois and Missouri, so will Colorado have to respond to a four-lane road to St. Francis. It will happen.

- Will bypasses hurt Kansas towns?

No. The study envisions any bypasses being built very close to a town, so business can adjust. Bypasses would be decided by the state and local communities together, after a public scoping process. On U.S. 81, for instance, Concordia rejected the idea of a bypass while Belleville has a road right along its west edge.

- How long will it take to get the job done, to open a four-lane road across the state?

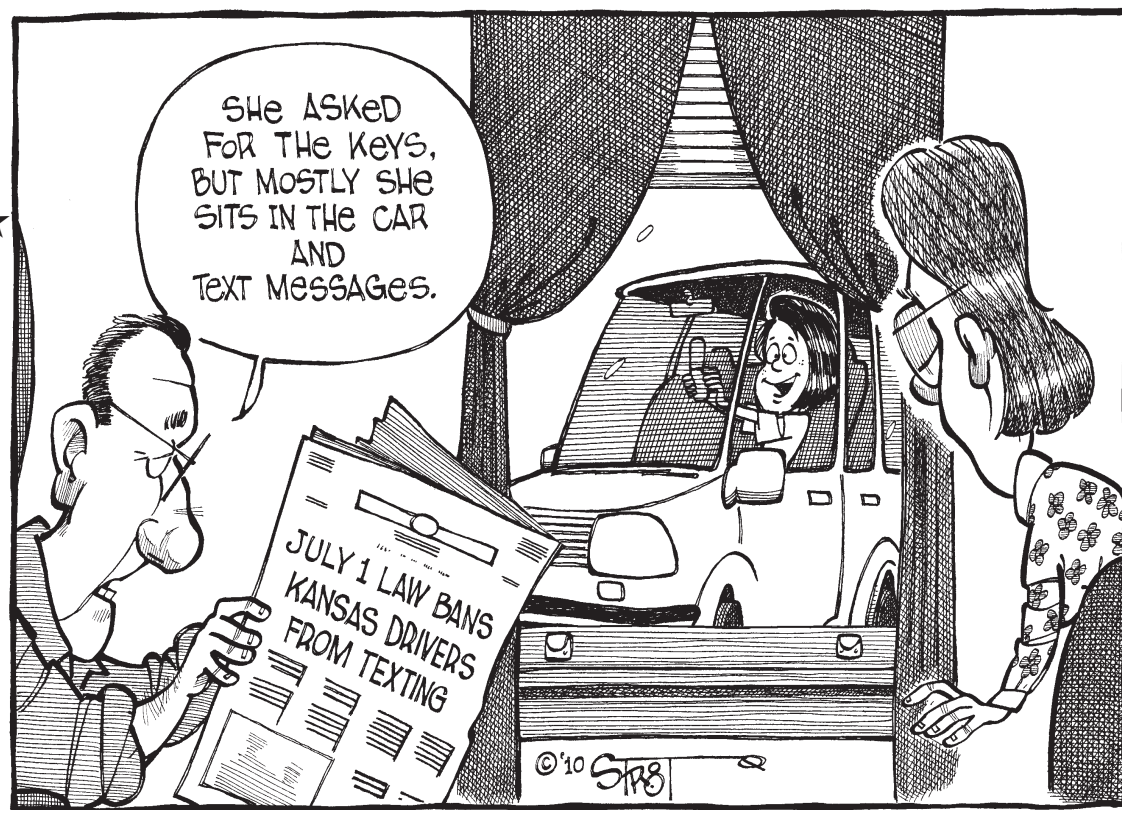
It took more than 30 years for supporters to get U.S. 81 widened north of Salina. Finally, the project just took off.

U.S. 36 supporters, particularly out west, can expect as long a process. The important part is to begin.

And with completion of the Docking study, that has been done. The rest will follow, but it will require a long-term effort on the part of everyone along the road.

Our children and grandchildren will reap the rewards.

— Steve Haynes



## Storm wasn't so little after all

The toner wasn't set on the page, much less the ink dry on the paper for last week's column, when the storm hit.

We were putting *The Oberlin Herald* together on Monday night when one of the staff said, "I think it's raining."

This turned out to be an understatement.

It was raining. It was hailing. The wind was blowing. The street was running bank full.

We went back to work and got the paper finished and sent off to the press.

Steve stayed behind to finish up some office details and I headed home through streets that looked more like cement-sided canals. I was a little afraid I would drown my engine if I hit a dip.

At home, I discovered a mess on the back porch.

A large houseplant, which had come from my father's funeral 15 years ago, and spends each summer on the porch, was overturned and the pot broken. A railroad marker lamp that normally shines from a post on the back porch was torn from its moorings and lay on its side. And the spa cover was pulled up and tossed to the far side of the porch.

The first order of business was to replace the cover, take the marker light inside for Steve to check out in



### Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
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the morning and right the plant.

The pot was broken but not destroyed, so I used a pancake turner to scrape up the spilled soil and called Steve at the office so he wouldn't track the mud all over the floor when he came home.

It was midnight and still raining, so I called it a night and went to bed.

When he came to bed an hour later, Steve asked if I had noticed the limb in the front yard.

Nope.

The morning brought sunshine and a good look at the devastation.

The limb in the front yard was the size of a medium tree, and it was laying upside down on the bushes and leaning against the house with its trunk inches from a window. But the house had only little holes and smashed gutters, no big holes or broken windows.

Over in the gardens, it was a different story. Two or three medium-sized limbs had landed on the side

garden, so that a mixture of bent tomato poles, pepper plants and cucumber tendrils were all that could be seen.

The first order of business was rescuing the tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers.

I removed the limbs, straightened the stakes and pulled most of the remaining spinach, since it was flattened anyway, and I'd have had to step on it to get to the tomatoes.

When all the junk was pulled away, it looks like I've only lost one tomato plant and several green tomatoes.

Over the past week, the corn has started to straighten up and the little white butterflies that beget little green worms have returned.

The tree man came on Friday and reduced the limb on the front to a small pile of firewood. So, we're almost back to where we were a week ago — less one tomato plant and some miscellaneous siding, gutters and decorative bushes.

## Birds slow finding feeders

This about Cynthia's bird feeders. They're not mine, though I do watch the show now and then, but she says I write about wild animals and she does the pets.

(Carolyn Plotts has the farm animals, but that's a whole 'nother column.)

This feeding stuff started a couple of years ago. She bought two feeders and hung them in the back yard. Then a couple more. Then the squirrels got into the ones on the tree, so we're down to the pair on the iron double shepherd's crook.

Oh, we've always had hummingbird feeders in Colorado, but that's a given. Hummers are cute and cuddly and everyone loves them. It takes more interest and a bird book to get into the big birds.

Last year, she started feeding the big birds in Colorado from another double shepherd's crook out front. We noticed that it takes a couple of days for the bird supply to build up. Maybe it takes time for the word to spread, but spread it does.

And so this year, after she filled the feeders, she complained that the birds were awfully slow finding them. At home, where they are nearly 365-day-a-year service centers, she has to refill them every couple of days. In the mountains this year, they'd gone a couple of days with hardly a noticeable decline in the seed level.

Then the next day, she noticed that one of the feeders, the left one, was down more than an inch while



### Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
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the other was still nearly full. We couldn't quite figure this out, and besides, we had company, and it was time to go to the theater.

When we got home that night, we discovered what was happening.

Standing in the front yard, right in front of the feeder, licking one of the tiny openings, was a full-grown mule deer doe. Now that's some bird.

Bambi didn't want to move, either, but when we parked and opened the doors, she ambled off, watching over her shoulder to see if we would stay.

She hasn't been back as far as we know, but the bird count has started to build. Lots of wrens and sparrows. Cynthia got pretty excited the other day when we saw a red-headed house finch. Some plain brown birds that may be female finches, but none of the flashy yellow ones.

Then today, there was a mountain bluebird. It said it must be the bluebird of happiness, but it didn't land at the feeders.

This evening, I spotted a robin on the ground below the feeder. I thought that unusual, because rob-

ins seem to prefer bugs and worms to grain.

Then a fledgling, with spotted wing feathers and a red-orange breast, hopped out from under the spruce tree behind the feeder, and momma popped a worm in its mouth.

So that's what's up!

I have to admit, while I'd never have bought bird feeders, I can spend as much time watching the continual show out front as Cynthia does. Between the humming birds on the porch and their big cousins out front, there's always something going on.

And now I notice, she's got another shepherd's crook stashed out by the kitchen window, where we have breakfast, waiting for feeders. So I guess we'll have even more birds.

As long as she doesn't start feeding bears or lions, I guess I can handle it. The cats think it's OK, too, but that's not my department.

Oh... gotta go. A pair of bluebirds just landed out front. Maybe I can get a picture....

## Life's little pleasures are best

It takes a child to help you see what is right before your eyes.

We had some friends from "the city" visit over the Fourth of July. They had never been to a farm, so I made arrangements with friends Dave and Charla for them to see harvest in action.

During the drive into the country I told them how important wheat harvest is to farm families, and how busy the family would be so we would just look at the combine and perhaps get a chance to see wheat being loaded into a big truck. I gave the usual safety speech and trusted everyone was listening.

When we got to the wheat field my friends and their children were bug-eyed as the green monster combine rolled up to unload its golden cargo. Charla surprised me when she said, "Who's ready to ride?"

Every hand shot up. "Two at a time," she said. And, that began the grand rotation. Everybody had a chance to ride a "round."

Big kids took little kids; moms took toddlers; and grandpa tried to take a grandson who chickened out at the last minute. Everyone thought it was awesome. Some were ready



### Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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to move to a farm if it meant riding a four-wheeler or a combine every day.

I showed them how to crush a head of wheat in the palms of their hands, blow away the chafe and crunch the kernels with their teeth then chew, chew, chew until they had "gum."

It was a grand experience for my city-slicker friends and showed me, once again, how life's simple pleasures are the best.

— ob —

Grandma's curiosity finally got the best of her. I had to know how our 11-year old granddaughter, Taylor, was faring on her 10-day trip to Canada. A phone call to her parents revealed she had called them the day before and reported she is "having a ball."

I knew it all along. No worries.

### From the Bible

The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your love, O LORD, endures forever — do not abandon the works of your hands.

Psalm 138:8 (NIV)

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## Meeting distresses some families

To the Editor:

We were rather distressed to read the article in the paper last week (about the hospital board meeting). It was disturbing to hear such negativity about our doctors.

We were particularly distressed by the remarks about Dr. Sliter. I am aware there are those that don't care for her, but we'd like to say that she has been a wonderful doctor for our family. She is very caring and concerned and wants the very best for us.

She has always taken an extreme effort to do what she feels is best for us. When things were beyond her expertise she has called on specialists.

We brought my Dad to her after he was in another hospital last summer where the care he was receiving

there was so minimalistic that it was obvious they had written him off as too old to be bothered with. After receiving the care of Dr. Sliter and the wonderful staff at the Oberlin Hospital, Dad made a remarkable recovery and was actually stronger in many respects than before.

There is no perfect doctor for everyone, which is why multiple doctors are needed. And everyone is due their opinion, but it would seem the wisest choice not to air negative opinions in such a way as to hurt our entire medical profession in Oberlin.

I'm grateful we have a clinic and hospital in Oberlin and I don't want to have to go elsewhere for medi-

cal services. If we aren't careful, it could be a possibility. How sad would that be?

If Dr. Sliter did say something unprofessional, then I'm quite sure that something must have been said to have really upset her. Our families' thanks go out to Dr. Sliter for all of her care and concern and for doing the best for us. Thank you Dr. Sliter and all the staff at the hospital and the clinic!

Troy and Deb Marshall Family,  
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