

Keeping roads open helps businesses

One good thing: Most of the highway projects planned for northwest Kansas in the next few years will be done without closing any roads.

Between Norton and Norcat, for instance, U.S. 36 is being rebuilt from the ground up without any closures. K-27 south of Goodland is to be brought up to modern standards while traffic flows.

That isn't always the case. U.S. 283 between Norton and Hill City has been closed twice in the last few years, with traffic diverted for months at a time. U.S. 83 south of Oakley was closed for most of two seasons. K-27 between Goodland and St. Francis was down for most of a year.

While the new roads we get are wonderful, closing a highway like between two counties can be an economic disaster.

The state Department of Transportation knows closing roads is unpopular, but sometimes it judges the extra cost of keeping a road open — by building detours and shoo-flies, for instance — as too much.

What the state cannot measure, though, is the cost of diverting traffic to business in towns on either side of a closure. When the official detour is 35 or more miles out of the way, traffic often just keeps on going.

And that can cost businesses a bunch. When most of our businesses are barely hanging on, that's not acceptable.

This issue is frustrating for highway officials as it is for business owners and public officials in the towns affected, we know. Sometimes there could be more cooperation.

Some counties have been willing to have a paved detour on a county road. Cheyenne County did that between Wheeler and St. Francis a couple of years ago, and now has a nice paved county road between the two towns.

Other counties have balked at the shared cost of preparing a detour. That might be shortsighted, considering the sales tax revenue they stood to lose, but commissioners have to look at their bottom line, too.

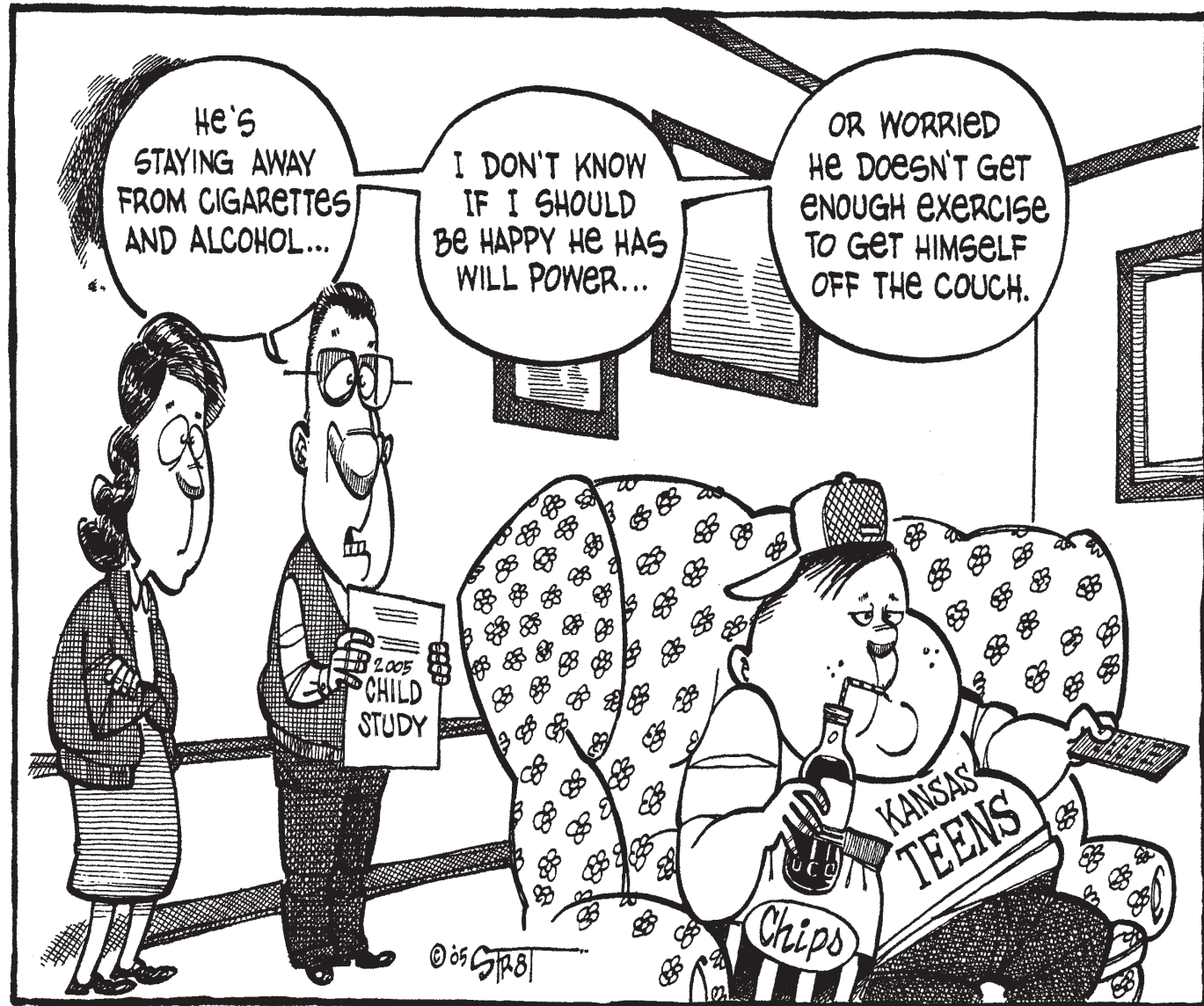
The best alternative, even when it costs a little more, is to keep the highway open and let traffic flow through a project. That may involve some short detours, as is being done west of Norton, or simply moving the new road to one side or the other, as was done east of Atwood.

Either way, business is not affected and there's no major economic burden on the towns involved. With the economy the way it is, that's all we can ask for.

Better that the state spend a little more than have businesses pay a stiff, and unequal, "tax" while the road is closed.

This is one trend we can applaud.

— Steve Haynes



A phone call can be tough to take

There are few things that can take the wind out of my sails. It takes quite a bit to rock me. But 12 little words from my youngest daughter knocked the props out from under me.

"Mom, I need to have surgery," Kara said in a phone call last week. "But, don't worry, it's not cancerous."

At first, I was stunned. She went on to tell me her condition was fairly common and her doctor was confident all would be well. It appeared to be pre-cancerous and he wanted to be cautious.

She was convincing, but after we hung up, the tears came. I think they were tears of relief. But every time I think about her being sick or losing her, they come flooding back. Even now, after a week of getting used to the idea, I still get teary.

Kara's fine. I'm the basket case.

—ob—

The good news is, I'm going to Dallas to be with Kara for her surgery and will bring Taylor, my 6-year-old granddaugh-

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



ter, back for a two-week stay.

She is so much fun and seems to love spending time with us. I'm already "priming" her with promises of a wiener roast as soon as she gets here. It makes it hard on her folks when she goes home, though. She can't understand why they can't build a fire in their backyard like Pa-Pa and Grandma do. Big cities frown on open fires in back yards, it seems.

Taylor's coming will prompt me to get her room ready. The extra bedroom in the Inn, where we're still living, has turned into a "catch-all." Jim's computer desk is in there, plus all my clothes, shoes, scrapbooking supplies, shoes, gift-wrapping supplies, plastic totes with Christmas decorations, and did I mention shoes? Then there's Jim's guitars, plus more shoes.

Where do they come from? I have more shoes than two or three women need. And they all seem to end up in the front room or the bathroom at the same time. I tend to kick my shoes off as soon as I hit the door, and one of my worst habits is to not

put them away. When I finally do, usually right before Hattie the Hired Girl shows up, they end up thrown into a basket in the extra bedroom. Which brings me back to getting the room ready for Taylor's stay.

It's to the point where everything will have to come out before I can decide what can go back in.

—ob—

I am "kind of" looking for a baby bunny rabbit, or its remains. Right now, I'm not sure which one I would rather find.

Last week Jim came into the house holding a little bit of fluff. A baby bunny had been hiding by the trash barrel and Jim brought him in to show me.

"I bet Alex would like to see him," he said.

He found a deep-sided box, placed said bunny along with some blades of grass and a mayonnaise-jar lid of water inside the box. The plan was to take the bunny to show our local granddaughter later that afternoon.

However, when I came home, the box was empty except for the lid of water and the grass. Baby bunny was nowhere to be found. And, believe me, I looked everywhere.

"Max, did you do something with him?" I asked the family cat.

Jim wouldn't believe his cat would do something like that.

I would.

I just know that I don't want to find part of a rabbit.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Norton woman disagrees with columnist's opinion

Dear Editor:

I am grateful that Mary Kay Woodyard and *The Norton Telegram* have opened the door for a bit of discussion and debate on the Terri Schaivo situation.

Here a human being was denied food and water for sustenance. She merely was disabled like so many others in our world.

Mrs. Woodyard said, "A woman leaves her family and clings to her husband, 'according to the Bible'."

Ms. Schaivo's husband refused her proper care and rehabilitative services throughout the years. I'm not certain that this man, who lives with another woman, fathering children by her, could be considered one to whom someone could "cling to", especially in times of "worse".

As an R.N., I am fully aware of what "having a feeding tube" entails.

It is a simple form of providing nutri-

tion either through a small tube inserted through the nose into the stomach or directly into the gastrointestinal tract.

When a baby cannot feed itself, one feeds him/her with a spoon. A feeding tube is merely another mode of feeding someone. Providing liquids and food through a feeding tube is an "ordinary" method of providing nutrition, most commonplace today.

As has been previously mentioned in other editorials, Ms. Schaivo was not in a coma, could breathe on her own, was not terminally ill, and yet our judicial system that represents "you and I" did nothing.

Ms. Schaivo lived in a democracy just like you and I. She was supposedly protected by the Bill of Rights, guaranteed the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, just like you and I.

Ms. Schaivo's rights were taken away

from her, and, yes, we stood by and allowed her to starve to death, depriving her of food and water, "an extremely agonizing death," according to St. Louis neurologist Dr. William Burke in his publication "Forced Exit".

The title of one of the editorials by Mrs. Woodyard was, "Some Things Shouldn't Be Governed."

The very fact that the guarantee of "life" is in our Declaration of Independence automatically allows our government to intervene and intercede when such an atrocity occurs. This is not a private matter when the outcome affects all of us.

Otherwise, why have any laws at all, if in fact, we don't care about protecting the rights of humanity, and most basically "the right to life".

In Florida, the law even protects dogs from "euthanasia".

But, then I see, human beings must not be as worthy of such protection and that there is a frightening perception that disabled people are better off dead.

In that case, "buyer beware". You and I "beware", for we too, are disabled perhaps in far greater ways than Terri Schaivo.

Beverly Bethune
Norton

WRITE:

The Norton Telegram encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses which do not pertain to a public issue.

Bill designed to lower fuel prices

Capitol Views

Rep. Jerry Moran



Congressman Jerry Moran recently supported House passage of energy legislation aimed at lowering the costs of fuel for cars, homes and businesses and reducing the country's dependence on foreign oil. H.R. 6, the Energy Policy Act of 2005, is similar to legislation that was twice passed by the House but never received approval by the U.S. Senate.

"With gas prices at an all-time high, well in advance of the peak traveling time, I hope that the urgency for this legislation is recognized," Congressman Moran said. "Meeting our nation's energy needs includes better controlling fuel prices, but it's also about having an affordable, reliable, and clean energy supply. If our country wants to remain competitive in a global market, we must have electricity and other energy sources priced at levels that allow us to compete. We need the House and Senate to reach an agreement and move forward to provide important benefits for Kansans."

The House-passed energy legislation includes incentives for more domestic oil production, as well as tools that help promote renewable fuels, such as ethanol, biodiesel and wind energy. Included in the legislation is a renewable fuels requirement to add five billion gallons per year of ethanol and other renewable-based fuel to the nation's fuel supply. Renewable energy sources are a growing part of the Kansas agriculture and statewide economy, and are also cleaner burning fuels, making them friendlier to the environment.

The legislation also contains a provision that would lengthen Daylight Savings Time by two months, to begin in March and end in November. Lengthening the amount of time that Americans work during sunlight hours would reduce oil consumption by an estimated 10,000 barrels a day during the extra months. In addition, the legislation promotes investment in the country's electric transmission capacity, reducing the danger of blackouts and increasing access to wind energy and other renewable energy sources. Other provisions call for additional use of solar energy as well as incentives for hybrid cars and hydrogen use.

"The price of oil and gas affects everyone in Kansas, from the single family home in Johnson County to the farming operation in Johnson City," Mr. Moran said. "Today's legislation is a responsible way to help bring good things to our state: more jobs, cheaper fuel, lower energy costs and additional markets for Kansas products."

For more information, contact Congressman Moran at (202) 225-2715 or visit his web page at www.house.gov/morank01/.

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