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By JESSICA CRAWFORD • Daily Leader

Nearly two weeks ago, Garden City, Dodge City and Liberal met to discuss issues affecting the three communities of the Southwest Kansas Coalition. Several highway projects were the main topic of conversation between the commissioners representing the three communities.

“We met here in Liberal,” Mayor Joe Denoyer said of the meeting.

“Basically commissioners from Garden City, Dodge City and Liberal along with staff members got together to prioritize projects, DOT projects that we as a coalition would like to present to the legislature in the upcoming session, 2010.”

Although no decisions were made at the Aug. 19 meeting at the Depot, several four-laning projects were discussed.

“We never made any decisions, we just talked about what we would like to see and then we are going to take them back to our individual commissions and vote on them,” Denoyer said. “There was a consensus in the room that night of all three communities supporting as their number one priority the four-laning of Highway 54/400 from Kingman to Mullinville.”

Though four-laning U.S. Highway 54 from Kingman to Mullinville was at the forefront of the discussion, several other four-laning projects were discussed as well.

“There were three or four other projects that were on there, four-laning of Highway 50 from Garden City to Dodge City, the four-laning of 54 from Liberal to Mullinville and then 83 Highway,

adding passing lanes,” Denoyer explained. “Those other three we didn’t put in any particular order but we felt our number one priority which would benefit all three communities without one directly benefitting more than another would be the four-laning of 54 Highway from Kingman to Mullinville.”

Denoyer explained the premise behind the coalition and how the payment of entry benefits each community and gives Southwest Kansas a voice in Topeka.

“We have hired Robin Jennison as a lobbyist for the Southwest Kansas Coalition and we split his salary three ways,” he said. “I want to say it is \$9,000 each, it is close to that. He is a former state legislator.”

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