



View from the Chair

Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission

Truth and Consequences

November 7, 2014



Dear «GreetingLine»

As our country and state assess the impact of last Tuesday's general election, the Commission met Thursday in Springfield. In the months since the August vote on Amendment 7, the Commission has been busy at work behind the scenes analyzing the consequences of that vote. Our staff continues to project that there will be only \$325 million by fiscal year 2017 (beginning July 1, 2016) to maintain a system that requires \$485 million annually to maintain. Obviously, something has to give. Just as MoDOT went through the painful process of having to trim its organization, Missourians must be prepared for a reduction in services as MoDOT works to live within its financial means. That process is ongoing at the moment, and I want to assure you it is being done in a very thorough and thoughtful way.

Illustrative of the challenges we face, Director Nichols highlighted a situation that may become all too common in the state as our funding continues to shrink. Over the last three months, we've experienced a flurry of unplanned bridge closures following routine inspections that showed some serious concerns.

Nichols said that there are currently 2,000 deficient bridges in the state – out of a total of approximately 10,400. One hundred bridges a year are added to this number, but we are not fixing 100 per year. As a result we're falling further behind each year. The highly successful Safe & Sound Bridge Improvement Program repaired or replaced 802 of the state's worst bridges enabling us to keep our head above water, but now we're losing ground on that progress.

To help keep motorists informed about these unplanned bridge closures, MoDOT created a webpage, www.modot.org/bridges, where travelers can get more information, including how long the bridges will be closed and what we're doing to fix them.

While we received this sobering news, our partners in southwest Missouri reminded us of how much we have accomplished by working in partnership – especially through our highly successful cost-share program.

We heard from the Ozarks Transportation Organization and the Springfield Chamber of Commerce, who showcased several major transportation projects that resulted from a combined effort involving their organizations, city and county governments and MoDOT.

The Commission also heard from Branson officials about their plans to reconstruct Route 76 through the heart of their entertainment district as a “complete streets” project – the “Spirit of 76” – that would enhance the busy road for all modes of transportation.

These partnerships underscore what can be accomplished when we all work toward a common goal and bring something to the table. That’s why it’s so unfortunate that MoDOT’s cost-share program has been suspended indefinitely because of decreasing revenues. Without that key program, it will be difficult for communities, local governments and organizations to pool their resources to improve their transportation system. These communities do not see such improvements as luxuries, but as necessities for future economic development.

We face many challenges in transportation and we’ve illustrated two - inadequate resources to maintain our bridge infrastructure and the inability to fund our cost-share program. We must continue the drumbeat for additional transportation funding.

If you would like to communicate with the Commission, you can always reach us at MHTC@modot.mo.gov.

Onward!

Stephen R. Miller
Chairman

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