



View from the Chair

Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission

New Year Brings Challenges

January 2, 2015



Dear «GreetingLine»

Happy New Year! As 2015 dawns, transportation in Missouri faces unprecedented challenges. Over the last four months, MoDOT has been working diligently to determine how to best minimize the consequences of its reduced funding levels. The proposed plan on how to meet these challenges will be presented to the Commission at its January 14th meeting in Jefferson City. In coming "*Views from the Chair*" we will examine this in more detail.

Addressing these challenges will require creativity, new thinking and a multi-pronged approach. As I am sure you are aware, Governor Nixon requested that MoDOT examine the tolling of I-70 as one possible option. We welcome the Governor's involvement and leadership on this issue. We also look forward to working with the General Assembly. It is clear that solving this issue that is so important to the future of Missouri is going to require bi-partisan support and the efforts of both our Governor and the General Assembly.

For your information, you will find below the content of my letter to Governor Nixon on December 31, and a link to the full report the Governor requested.

Onward!

Stephen R. Miller
Chairman

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

I-70 Tolling Report: <http://www.modot.org/i70tollinganalysis/index.htm>

Dear Governor Nixon:

The State of Missouri made history in 1956 when it awarded the nation's first contract for construction of the Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. Soon thereafter construction began on a section of Interstate 70 in St. Charles County. Nine years later, the I-70 corridor across the state was completed, linking our two largest cities and creating an economic engine that drives our state's commerce.

The highway, though, has become a victim of its own success. It carries far more traffic today than what it was designed for – especially long haul trucks. It is increasingly congested. Its underlying base has deteriorated under years of traffic to such a degree that the roadbed must be replaced in its entirety – from the ground up. Surface treatments merely bandage the situation and as the underlying base continues to deteriorate these overlays last for shorter and shorter periods resulting in higher maintenance costs and greater disruption to traffic flow. All of I-70's mainline and crossroad bridges are nearing the end of their useful lives and will soon need to be replaced.

With a price tag of at least \$2 billion, however, it is a project the Missouri Department of Transportation cannot afford. There is no money in the budget to replace I-70. In fact, by fiscal year 2017 which begins July 1, 2016 we project an annual construction budget of approximately \$325 million -- \$160 million less than the \$485 million needed each year to simply maintain our system of roads and bridges in their current condition.

If we cannot identify additional funding I-70 will continue to deteriorate. MoDOT will resurface and maintain it to the best of its ability but traffic incidents and maintenance operations will cause lengthy backups. Drivers will experience increased numbers of trucks and congested conditions that compromise economic growth in our state. Most importantly, MoDOT will miss the opportunity to improve the safety along this vital corridor.

Attached is the report you requested examining tolls as a manner in which to finance the reconstruction of I-70. It is not a silver bullet to our transportation infrastructure funding needs, but it is an option to accomplish this important project.

Sincerely,

Stephen R. Miller, Chair
Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission

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