



View from the Chair

Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission

Thanks, Dave!

February 5, 2015



Dear «GreetingLine»

MoDOT Director Dave Nichols has advised the Commission of his intent to retire from MoDOT effective May 1, 2015. According to Dave, "It is time." Dave has been eligible for retirement for several years. Two years ago, following Director Kevin Keith's retirement, the Commission asked Dave to step up from his position as chief engineer and take on the role of director. Ever loyal and committed to MoDOT, Dave did not hesitate. As someone who naturally avoids the spotlight and is more interested in the success of the team than his own advancement, I am sure that he would have been quite

happy to remain as chief engineer and support the work of another, but he responded to our call. Even though he was eligible for retirement at the time, he agreed to a two-year commitment. He has given us that and more.

There is never a good time, it seems, for a change in directors, but Dave has set MoDOT on a good course. As chief engineer and then as director he helped to oversee the downsizing of the organization. The Bolder Five-Year Direction which officially ends March 1 has resulted in savings that put more than \$600 million back on the roads over the last five years. The financial crisis MoDOT now faces would have been much worse but for this effort. Given his empathy for MoDOT employees, this was a very difficult process. He has deep affection for the men and women of what he calls "Team MoDOT."

Dave worked tirelessly to support efforts to provide new funding for transportation. He led the formulation of MoDOT's long-range transportation plan and the "On The Move" campaign to identify needs across all modes of transportation. He understood the importance of promoting diversity within MoDOT and on MoDOT projects, offering job training and creating economic opportunities for the disadvantaged.

Dave provided valuable assistance to the General Assembly which ultimately led to a bipartisan vote to place Amendment 7 on the ballot. He then traveled to every corner of the state to answer questions and address the concerns of Missourians.

After Amendment 7 failed, Dave spearheaded the development of "Missouri's 325 System" which the Commission approved yesterday. It provides a disciplined, principled and equitable way to prioritize and allocate limited transportation funds. As I write, he continues to work with the General Assembly and the Governor regarding possible funding options to avoid reductions in services.

Dave has been a passionate advocate for safety. Over his tenure, fatalities on Missouri roads have declined to historic lows. But he continues to urge that such an achievement is not good enough – every life is precious.

Over his career he has been a builder of bridges – in both the literal and figurative sense. Dave has served in assignments throughout the state and during that time he was responsible for projects which spanned rivers and roads which connected communities, but he also bridged the gap that separated groups with sometimes competing interests and has forged valuable partnerships with stakeholders throughout the state: contractors, engineers, labor, business, cities, counties, chambers of commerce etc. He has put his indelible stamp upon the MoDOT culture.

After 31 years of service he has earned the right to select the time that is right for him. Dave has left MoDOT a better organization than he found it for which the Commission is forever grateful. Even with limited funding, the organization itself has never been better positioned. Challenges lie ahead but Dave has helped to chart a path and has fostered a team that is well equipped for the challenges.

The Commission knows well that Dave will remain 100 percent committed until his departure on May 1. There is much he still wants to accomplish, including some progress this legislative session on the funding issue. In the interim, the Commission will have an opportunity to plan for the selection of a new director. As the Commission defines that process, I will share it with you.

Please join me in congratulating Dave Nichols on a job well done and thanking him for his service.

In gratitude,

Stephen R. Miller
Chairman

If you would like to communicate with the Commission, you can always reach us

at MHTC@modot.mo.gov.

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