



View from the Chair

Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission

Take The First Step Now!

March 9, 2015



Dear «GreetingLine»

There is no perfect solution to our transportation funding need that will satisfy everyone, but we know that a solution must be found. There will be no ideal time, but we know the time for action is now. A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step, and the current session of the Missouri General Assembly is an opportunity to take that first step.

Too often, we suffer from paralysis at both the state and federal levels. We have become masters at finding reasons to avoid addressing our most serious problems. Missourians must do better. The problem is well known: our state has not increased its funding for transportation since the General Assembly acted in 1992 – some 23 years ago. Over that time the cost of everything has more than doubled. The purchasing power of the 17 cents from the last fuel tax increase is now worth eight cents in today's dollars.

There are some who deny there is a problem, although simple math and a look at our neighboring states dispel that contention. Others argue that MoDOT should simply cut the organization more. Further cuts, however, would impair the department's ability to carry out its most basic functions, thereby jeopardizing public safety. A few say MoDOT should just use up its available cash to plug a hole, but that is not a long-term fix and would threaten MoDOT's bond rating.

Let's make this personal. Think about your own household. What would your quality of life be like today if you were making the same income you were making in 1992? You and your family would face some very tough choices.

And, what if when you went to your boss, he told you the same thing year after year: learn to live with less. What would you cut out: mortgage payments, auto loan, utility payments, insurance,

food, medicine or physician care?

The reason that action must be taken now is because without it, Missouri will lose some federal matching funds. Continued discussion this legislative session banking on something happening next year doesn't work. And here's why:

- Starting in 2017, MoDOT will be unable to match \$167 million in federal funds. The following year, and each year thereafter, that amount grows to \$400 million.
- If the Legislature waits until next year to pass any kind of tax increase for transportation, the earliest it could be collected would be January 1, 2017. The earliest that MoDOT would receive any significant deposits would be the end of March 2017.
- That means it would take until 2019 to be able to fully match federal funds, losing \$111 million in 2017 and \$119 million in 2018.

Time is of the essence. MoDOT needs additional revenue if we are to avoid implementation of Missouri's 325 System. The Legislative session is at its halfway mark and ends at 6 p.m. on May 15. Please contact your representatives and senators (their contact information may be found at www.mo.gov) and make it clear to them how important transportation investment is to the safety of our citizens and to the economic competitiveness and vitality of our state.

Let's get going!

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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