



# View from the Chair

Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission

## Caring for the home we love

December 23, 2015



Dear Reader,

The holiday season for me is a time of taking stock of the people and things that matter most and looking to the future. It is a time to cherish and care for the home I love. Over the last six years, I have had the privilege to travel across my home state to hear the hopes and dreams of Missourians. In ways I never appreciated when first appointed, those hopes and dreams are affected by transportation – and all it impacts and facilitates: education, meaningful work, connecting with family and friends, full participation in society, access to goods and services, emergency care, adventure and exploration. Every one of us, every day, is affected. And, yet we take it for granted.

Everywhere I go, elected officials and citizens alike acknowledge the need to care for our transportation system. However, leaders willing to step forward with practical, effective, long-term solutions are few. I have been looking for something we can unite behind. As if on cue, several unique events over the last few weeks offer hope for a happy new year for transportation.

On December 1, Sen. Doug Libla (R-Poplar Bluff) pre-filed SB 623 in the Senate that would offer Missourians the first transportation funding increase in 20 years and break the cycle of lethargy that jeopardizes our prosperity. Sen. Libla's bill calls for a modest increase in a true user fee – the state fuel tax – of 1.5 cents for gas and 3.5 cents for diesel. Although this falls short of the \$160 million needed to preserve our system, it would generate approximately \$56 million for our state system (and \$24 million for our cities and counties). The bill would also represent a significant first step to addressing some of our highest needs – our critical-condition and weight-restricted bridges. The need for this kind of a solution has resonated in the House also as Rep. Keith English (I-Florissant) has filed HB 1381 which would increase all fuel taxes by 2 cents – raising just slightly less than Sen. Libla's bill. Additionally, other legislators have filed bills aimed at addressing Missouri's long-term insufficient funding challenge.

Transportation until the last few decades has always been a bi-partisan issue. In the past, we

found it easy to come together to promote the common good. There are signs that we may recapture those days. In an interview last Thursday, Governor Nixon said he hopes Sen. Libla's bill gets to his desk so he can sign it. The Governor noted that the increase is small enough to avoid conflicting with the state's Hancock Amendment, but represents an important "down payment" on Missouri's roads.

Missourians are eager for this kind of leadership from our General Assembly and our Governor. Already support is rallying around the effort. The Missouri Municipal League which represents more than 660 municipalities and 6500 municipal officials has announced its support for an increase in the user-based fuel tax. The Missouri Association of Counties, representing 114 counties and 1400 elected county officials consisting of commissioners, county clerks, election authorities, recorders, auditors, prosecutors, sheriffs, treasurers, public administrators and circuit clerks has also offered its support for an increase in transportation funding. And, the Farm Bureau representing rural Missourians, with local offices in every county has pledged its support.

The associations representing Missouri's highway contractors – the Associated General Contractors (AGC) of Missouri and the Heavy Constructors Association (HCA) – and Missouri's engineers – the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) – have all offered the support of their organizations for Sen. Libla's plan. More support is expected in the coming weeks as Missourians rally to support Sen. Libla's bill. More support is expected in the coming weeks from other groups as Missourians rally to support this important issue.

There will never be unanimity of support, but as we prepare for a new year and new legislative session, the future of Missouri begins to look a little brighter just as our days begin to grow a little longer and the joy of the holiday season dawns.

Happy holidays to all ... and let's celebrate the start of something great.

Stephen R. Miller  
Chairman

If you would like to communicate with the Commission, you can always reach us at [MHTC@modot.mo.gov](mailto:MHTC@modot.mo.gov). If you would like to read previous issues of the "View," you can find them on the MoDOT website: <http://www.modot.org/ViewFromTheChair/index.htm>

Please forward this e-mail to anyone interested in Missouri transportation news.  
[Unsubscribe](#) | [Subscribe](#)