



View from the Chair

Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission

It's All About the People

April 3, 2015



Dear Reader,

On so many fronts, it was never made clearer to me than it was at this week's Commission meeting, that our work as highway commissioners is all about people – the people we work with and the people for whom we work.

As we seek to provide the very best transportation system we can, we recognize that our greatest resource is our people. The men and women who work for MoDOT are dedicated, innovative, passionate about safety and committed to doing the very best job possible.

Perhaps it's because they take after their leaders, people like MoDOT Director Dave Nichols and Chief Financial Officer Roberta Broeker, both of whom were recognized yesterday. Since it was Dave's last meeting of the Commission prior to his May 1 retirement, we presented him with a resolution documenting the many successes he has enjoyed during his 31-year career and thanked him for his service and his leadership. We will forever be indebted to him for how he's shepherded us through some tough times the last two years, and for the humility he exhibited in doing his job always putting the welfare of others before self.

We also recognized Roberta's excellent leadership qualities in appointing her as MoDOT's interim director. She has enjoyed a 35-year career in state government including the last 10 years as MoDOT's CFO. She's absolutely committed to quality, and has the skills and experience to guide the department while we search for a permanent director. With Roberta's help, we are positioned for a seamless transition for employees, customers and stakeholders.

It's important that we identify the right person to lead MoDOT in the future and we have retained Grant Cooper & Associates to lead a national search. We expect to be able to announce the next permanent director of MoDOT in the fall.

We also heard personal stories about how our our highways affect our livelihoods.

Andrea "Andy" Jackson, a farmer from LaPlata, Mo., showed us photos of narrow, rutted, pot-marked and shoulderless roads in northern Missouri that are shared by heavy trucks carrying grain, rock, cattle and fertilizer, tractors of all sizes, tillage equipment, combines, school buses, teen drivers, Amish horse-and-buggies, and even cyclists. "These supplementary highways are a vital part of our economy, and without shoulders, I'm concerned for our safety," she said.

Brian Reagan, transportation systems analysis engineer at MoDOT, explained that 27 percent of our supplementary routes are in poor condition today. But with our diminishing revenues, in 10 years 73 percent of those same routes will be poor with a cost of \$2.8 billion to restore them to today's condition.

At the other end of the spectrum, we were given a presentation by Tim Sylvester, a young visionary from Kansas City who has an idea for a rebuilt I-70 that uses pavement panels embedded with technology that would facilitate driverless vehicles and wireless recharging of electric vehicles on a subscription basis that would pay for the project. It's truly an out-of-the-box idea, but one that requires much more study and testing.

Those presentations graphically painted the challenges that we face – insufficient resources to adequately maintain two-thirds of our highway system and the inability to carve out money for even a small demonstration project that could have merit.

There are lots of things that are not in our control, but I suggest that fixing our roads is not one of them. It is something that is very much in our control, and in the control of Missouri's 200-or-so legislators. The clock is ticking on the remaining 25 days of the legislative session. Senate Bill 540 that raises the fuel tax by two cents for each of the next three years and then ties the future rate to the Consumer Price Index to protect against inflation, passed out of the Senate Transportation Committee unanimously with bi-partisan support on Wednesday. That's an important step. But we need to continue to push the fact that it's important that we act now, or begin losing millions and millions of federal dollars in 2017.

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. 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>

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