



# View from the Chair

Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission

## Progress on the 'Road to Tomorrow'

September 8, 2015



Dear Reader,

Three months ago in Kansas City's historic Union Station we announced our "Road to Tomorrow" initiative – an effort by MoDOT to inspire, attract and identify innovations for the re-construction of Interstate 70 – not only for the purpose of building a "smart highway" for the 21<sup>st</sup> century but for identifying new revenue sources. Last Wednesday, we gathered in the shadow of another symbol of Missouri's transportation heritage – the St. Louis Arch – to receive a progress report.

Since June, more than 190 ideas have been submitted to MoDOT's "Road to Tomorrow" team. Some are technical innovations that could be incorporated in the design and construction of a new roadway; others offer the opportunity to move freight more efficiently; and still others propose different ways to fund the 200-mile project.

The ideas have been screened and sorted by topic. For example: energy/utilities, trucking efficiencies, advertising, data/communications, funding, alternative travel modes, freight choices. Nearly a third of them have been examined in more detail, and 15 to 20 of those are being seriously studied to learn how they might benefit Missouri and I-70.

The R2T team offered some examples of the kind of innovations they are reviewing:

- Solar Roadways is pioneering the use of solar panels to replace our current asphalt and concrete surfaces. The panels would generate electricity, melt snow and provide additional lighting for safety. Solar Roadways has already completed a prototype in a parking lot in Idaho with funding from the Federal Highway Administration and is looking for a place to test the panels under traffic conditions.
- Peloton Technology uses vehicle-to-vehicle communications and radar-based active braking systems combined with vehicle control algorithms to link pairs of heavy trucks. The system controls braking and acceleration, similar to adaptive cruise control, and drivers remain fully engaged and retain steering control. The wireless link enables the

trucks to travel in close proximity dramatically reducing aerodynamic drag and thereby providing fuel economy savings to both the trailing and leading truck.

These are just a couple of the exciting possibilities. Where all of this takes us is uncertain – but it is moving us forward and generating enthusiasm.

As a result of the success of this initial effort MoDOT announced at our Commission meeting the issuance of a formal “Request for Information” which is the first formal step to seeking testing of some of these new technologies.

The vast majority of these innovations, however, require MoDOT to partner with private companies. If we want the private sector to partner with us to advance innovation in the transportation system of tomorrow, we need to create a business-friendly environment that makes Missouri attractive to private investment. This means that our General Assembly may have to pass enabling legislation to not only permit but to encourage companies to pick Missouri as the place to invest. Much more to come on this topic.

We have a lot of work to do – and this effort will take years – but we are on course and very encouraged by what we heard at our meeting in St. Louis. This effort, however, must be embraced by our political leaders and Missourians to be successful.

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](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>

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