

D5 Central

MoDOT Helps Ensure the Eagle Has Landed

by Holly Dentner

MoDOT wants to make sure that efforts to provide a safe and efficient transportation system don't conflict with efforts to protect wildlife and area habitats.

Last March, MoDOT employees discovered a bald eagle nest along the proposed alignment for the new U.S. Route 54 Expressway in Camden and Miller counties. The bald eagle is a federally protected species covered by the Migratory Bird Treaty and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, which meant that MoDOT would need to proceed very carefully to ensure that no harm came to the two adult eagles and two nestlings living there.

MoDOT environmental specialists and project managers worked closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Missouri Department of

Conservation to determine that the best course of action would be to wait for the eagles to leave the nest, and then remove it before the eagles returned in December to start the next season's nesting process.

"Eagles will reuse the same nest, but they can be very sensitive to disturbance from noise and



Sr. Environmental Specialist Bree McMurray and Andy Forbes, state avian ecologist with the Conservation Dept., check the eagle's nest for feathers they can have processed for genetic fingerprinting.

construction activity," said Bree McMurray, senior environmental specialist. "In this instance, private development near the proposed highway alignment meant that even if MoDOT changed the highway location, there could still be a disruption that might cause the eagles to abandon their nest.

"By removing the existing nest, the eagles can return to the lake area, but they will find a new location and build a new nest away from the construction."

The three agencies worked together for several months to secure a permit that allowed them to carefully remove the nest for scientific study and educational purposes.

A crane was brought in on Nov. 25 and the empty nest was cut from the tree intact. It will be stored in a secure location while MoDOT works with Conservation to prepare the nest for



It took a crane borrowed from the contractor to remove the nest, which was about 50 feet up in the tree. The nest removal took about an hour.

display. Plans for its permanent display location are still being determined.

"Changing the expressway alignment to avoid disrupting the eagle nest meant the possibility of significant project delays while right of way was renegotiated and new plans were designed," said Assistant District Engineer Eric Schroeter. "This alternative allowed us to do the right thing by being environmentally and financially responsible."

Interchange Opens in Boone County

Motorists are now using a brand new interchange at U.S. Route 63 and Gans Road in Boone County. Area officials participated in a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Nov. 20 and the interchange opened later that day.

The \$7.9 million project includes a new diamond interchange at the intersection of Route 63 and Gans Road and the realignment of Gans Road and Ponderosa Street.

"We are very pleased to open this interchange to traffic," said District Engineer Roger Schwartz. "It will increase safety for motorists using Route 63 because it has allowed for the removal of the crossover at Ponderosa Street, where a number of serious accidents have occurred."

The new interchange will also accommodate increased traffic generated by the new development area in south Columbia along Route 63 as well as help alleviate congestion at the Route AC interchange approximately 1.5 miles north of the new interchange.

Funding for the project is supported through public and private entities, including the Federal Highway Administration, MoDOT, the city of Columbia, the Gans Road and U.S. 63 Transportation Development District and the University of Missouri.

"This project is a model for how the local, state and federal governments, as well as area developers can work together to improve the transportation system while supporting area economic development," said Schwartz.



More than 50 people braved the very cold and windy weather to help celebrate the opening of the Gans Road Interchange in Columbia.

U.S. Route 54 Pavement Stands the Test of Time

by Holly Dentner

While the average motorist might not give too much thought to what goes into the asphalt beneath a vehicle's tires, it is MoDOT's responsibility to make sure that material is long-lasting and serves the public well.

MoDOT was recently honored with a 2007 Perpetual Pavement Award from the Asphalt Pavement Alliance. MoDOT was one of 10 transportation agencies across the nation recognized for a roadway segment that demonstrates excellence in design, quality construction, and value to the traveling public. The winning roadways must also have lasted at least 35 years without a structural failure.

The award recognized a 12.5-mile segment of U.S. Route 54 in Camden County, between Route 73 and the bridge over the Niangua Arm of the Lake of the Ozarks. The route opened in August 1970 and for more than 38 years has succumbed to nothing more than the usual cracking and rutting that accompanies weather, the environment and increasing traffic volumes.

"In 1985 we did place an inch-and-a-quarter asphalt overlay on the route, but a layer that thin does not alter a highway structurally," said MoDOT Assistant District Engineer Eric Schroeter.

"Work like that simply smooths out the ride and is considered very minor in comparison to the highway's overall condition."

The route's condition is particularly remarkable considering the number of vehicles now using it. Traffic has climbed from 2,585 vehicles and 260 trucks per day back in 1970 to 7,390 vehicles and 1,400 trucks today.

"The average lifespan of a pavement varies depending on traffic volume, the physical weight of vehicles using the highway, and weather, environment and soil conditions," said Schroeter. "It is truly impressive for this segment of Route 54 to hold up so well for so long."

Engineers at the National Center for Asphalt Technology evaluated the nominations and a panel of industry experts validated the winners. The award was presented on Nov. 12 at a ceremony in Nashville, Tenn.



MoDOT's 2007 Perpetual Pavement Award

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for more info

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