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Missouri Department of Transportation



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Transportation Report Asks, “Where Do We Go From Here?”

MoDOT Issues Annual Accountability Report to General Assembly

JEFFERSON CITY – The Missouri Department of Transportation has made significant improvements to the state’s highway system in the past few years. In fact, 83 percent of Missouri’s major highways are now in good condition and the state has experienced a 24 percent drop in highway deaths since 2005.

But as MoDOT faces a severe decrease in funding after this fiscal year, the department’s annual report to the Missouri legislature asks the question, “Where do we go from here?”

“It’s the elephant in the room,” MoDOT Director Pete Rahn said. “We’ve come a long way in proving we are accountable with the resources we’re given. To maintain our current system, even in its current condition, is going to take some tough decisions on how we’re going to fund transportation in the future and at what level.”

Rahn’s message to the legislature is not a new one. For several years, he has talked about transportation funding “falling off a cliff,” and that time is near. MoDOT’s construction awards in fiscal year 2009 total a high of \$1.5 billion based on Amendment 3 funds and stimulus money that runs out this year. They then fall in a sharp decline and drop to a low of \$421 million by fiscal year 2014.

“That level of funding puts us back in a minimal maintenance mode,” Rahn said. “We won’t be able to make needed transportation improvements that provide jobs, make our highways safer and reduce congestion.”

There are two main reasons funding for transportation is dropping so dramatically:

- People are driving less and buying fewer and more fuel-efficient vehicles; and

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- Amendment 3 bond proceeds will be used up and the new revenue coming in will go to repay the bonds, as the voter-approved measure mandated.

Rahn said the uncertainty of the federal highway bill, which has been extended twice while Congress works on a new version, makes it difficult to plan for the future. Another challenge facing the department is explaining that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act did not solve the state's transportation funding woes.

"Some in the public appear to believe that the recovery act funded all our transportation needs," Rahn said. "In reality, the one-time amount of money we received, while certainly welcome, amounted to about a third of our annual construction budget and is money we will not get in future years."

Rahn acknowledged that securing additional funding would take leadership, innovation and hard work. In the meantime, he pledged MoDOT would continue to deliver the best value possible for every transportation dollar.

The full 2009 Report to the Joint Committee on Transportation Oversight, including an executive summary, can be found on MoDOT's Web site, www.modot.org.

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