

Transportation Issues

A publication of the
Meramec Regional
Planning Commission
Transportation Advisory Committee



Representing Crawford, Dent, Gasconade, Maries, Osage, Phelps, Pulaski and Washington counties

Winter 2006

Region to have 29 bridges replaced or rehabbed via new state initiative

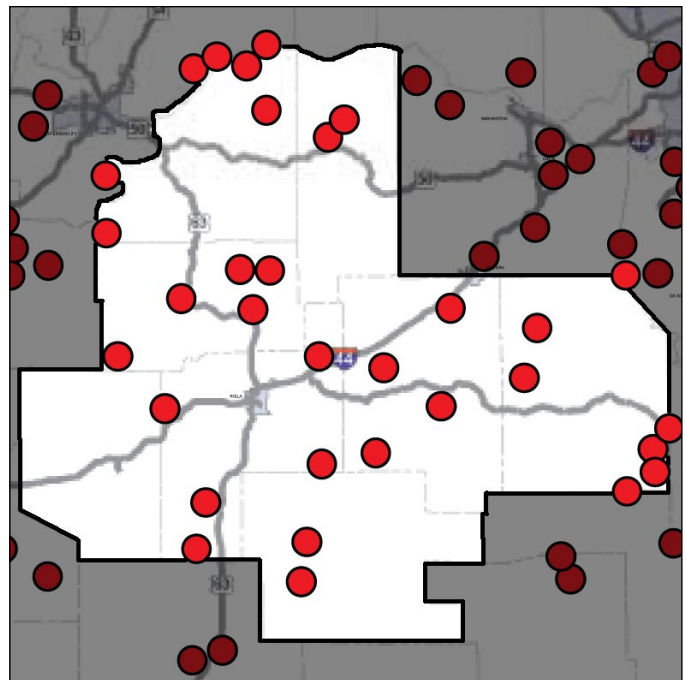
Thanks to a unique and aggressive plan by the Missouri Department of Transportation communities in the Meramec Region will see improvements to 29 bridges on minor routes.

Under a new initiative planned by MoDOT, most of the state's worst bridges will be rehabbed or replaced by 2012.

The Safe and Sound Bridge Improvement Plan targets 800 bridges in poor condition for improvement by the target date. To achieve such an aggressive target date, MoDOT is seeking to award a single contract for the design and building of the bridges.

Chris Rutledge, MoDOT District 9 planner, noted that with MoDOT's plan, the contractor would most likely design several cookie-cutter style bridges, rather than designing and engineering each bridge individually, which is more costly and time-consuming.

In addition, Mike Deusenberg, District 5 planner, revealed that MoDOT's plans were to have the contractor or another financier front the total cost of \$400 to \$600 million. MoDOT would repay the



MISSOURI'S 800 Better Bridges initiative, if successful, will result in 29 bridges being replaced in the Meramec Region's eight counties. A total of 11 bridges will be replaced or rehabbed in District 5 and 18 in District 9. According to Chris Rutledge, MoDOT District 9 planner, most of the bridges are on minor routes.

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MRPC, TAC supports primary seatbelt law

Seatbelts have not only become a primary concern for officials at the Missouri Department of Transportation, but the Meramec Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) and its Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) went on record recently in support of Missourians.

MRPC and its TAC have joined forces with the Missouri Department of Transportation and the Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety in support of the state passing a primary seatbelt law.

According to statistics provided by the coalition, approximately 68 percent of people who die in Missouri traffic crashes are not wearing safety belts. In addition, when properly worn, safety belts and functioning air bags can reduce the risk of death in a vehicle crash by 63 percent.

Further statistics show that

overall seatbelt usage for drivers and front seat passengers was 75.1 percent in a 2006 survey. However good that may seem, the same statistics among teenagers was a dismal 57.9 percent.

In 2005, a driver involved in a crash had a 1 in 32 chance of being killed if not wearing a safety belt.

Conversely, when a driver wore a safety belt, their chances of being killed were

only 1 in 1,017.

The Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety, who is spearheading the effort to pass the primary safety belt law, estimates that the passage of such a law would save approximately 90 lives per year; save Missourians \$230 million per year in medical costs; reduce Medicaid costs in the state by approximately \$10 million per year and qualify Missouri for an additional \$16 million in federal transportation funds.



ARRIVE ALIVE

I-44 guard cables to help provide safer roadway

Median guard cables are now being put in place along I-44 in the Meramec Region.

“One of our most critical goals is to reduce the number of fatalities on Missouri roads,” said MoDOT Director Pete Rahn. “Median guard cables have virtually eliminated crossover crashes on I-70, and have saved lives.”

The three-strand, low-tension median guard cable is designed to “catch” a vehicle before it crosses into the opposing traffic lanes, bringing it to a stop before it collides with other vehicles. It’s used where medians are less than 60-feet wide.



GUARD CABLES are being installed along I-44. The cables should provide a safer roadway, catching vehicles with the potential to create a crossover accident, like this one on I-70 near Columbia.

Between 1996 and 2005, more than 400 people were killed and more than 2,400 were injured in cross-median crashes on Interstates 44, 55 and 70 in Missouri.

According to MoDOT, in 2005 there were 15 fatal median crossover crashes along I-44, resulting in the death of 25 people and 45 disabling injuries.

Transportation Notes

TALK TO MODOT: If you have a suggestion, question or concern about transportation, call toll free 1-888-ASK-MODOT (1-888-275-6636) or visit online at www.modot.org.

2006 TAC MEETING SCHEDULE: The Meramec Transportation Advisory Committee will meet Feb. 8 at 4 p.m. at MRPC, 4 Industrial Drive in St. James. All meetings are open to the public.

TAC to study funding options

There is no perfect answer to funding future transportation projects in Missouri, the MRPC Transportation Advisory Committee learned recently.

A 5-cent per gallon increase in fuel tax yields \$150 million annually. A 1-percent sales tax on fuel would yield about \$60 million. A \$30 annual increase in vehicle registration fees would yield \$105 million annually. And a one-half cent sales tax would generate \$350 million annually. While one revenue source may not solve the problem, a solution must be found if Missouri is to continue road and bridges improvements.

The TAC and MRPC agreed by resolution in October that future transportation funding was an issue that the group should study and make input on.

Maries County Presiding Commissioner Jim Kleffner stated that local citizen input was important. "I think it's going to take a combination of things to make this work," he added.

Kleffner also says that people need to look beyond what a revenue increase will cost, but instead at what it will save them, especially in maintenance and fuel savings.

Transportation funding is also a federal issue. The federal Highway Trust Fund will be broke after 2009 so Congressional leaders will also be looking at ways to replenish federal highway dollars.

\$1.5 million in improvements underway at Rolla National Airport

While the city of Rolla is currently updating an Airport Layout Plan for the Rolla National Airport, another set of projects is moving forward at the former World War II training airfield. According to Glen Stratman, airport project manager for MoDOT, the improvements that the state and city are partnering on actually began in 2002. "The city is currently doing its own ALP update for economic development with the land and runway," he said. "After we have spent all of our funds, we will have reached \$1.5 million." Stratman said that figure doesn't include the roughly \$140,000 that the city contributed in matching funds.

"The city was required to give a 10 percent match during the first two years, 2001 and 2002," he said. "They gave a 5 percent match over the last four years."

Regardless of where the money is coming from, Rolla National Airport will have a new look for passersby and a new feel for pilots who touch down at the airfield.

The city of Rolla, who is responsible for contracting out the projects, awarded the

T-hangar contract to Alexander Construction. When finished, the new facility will be approximately 12,064 square feet and house 10 aircraft. Pilots will definitely notice the new edge lights that the city will be bidding out this fall or winter to be installed by the end of next summer. Before the edge lights can be installed, 25 feet of asphalt on either side of Runway 4-22 must be removed. The runway, which was recently sealed, will now be only 100 feet wide. The final project will be to seal coat Runway 13-31 within the next two years.

"Rolla is always looking for ways to market and improve Rolla National Airport for general aviation and the citizens of the Rolla region, said Rolla City Administrator John Butz. "MoDOT continues to be an outstanding partner in this regard." TranSystems Engineering is working on an airport master layout plan in addition to the airport layout plan, Butz said.



ROLLA National Airport is currently undergoing an Airport Layout Plan update. In addition to the ALP update, the city of Rolla has secured funding to build additional T-hangars, install lighting and seal coat a runway.

MoDOT completes work on top TAC, MRPC priority

With the completion of a stretch of Highway 72 in District 9, one of the top priorities of MRPC and the TAC can be marked off the region's needs list. MoDOT recently held a dedication ceremony for Route 72 in Dent County. Several improvements were recently made to the roadway, which connects the Meramec communities of Salem and Rolla. According to MoDOT Senior Construction Inspector Willie Johnson, increased traffic volumes, a narrow roadway and poor passing sight distance posed a challenge when it came to providing safe travel. "Improvements to Route 72 include

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cost at the end of the construction phase in 2012.

The contractor will also be responsible for maintaining the bridges in good condition for a period of 25 years before being re-integrated into MoDOT's state system. According to Rutledge, most of the bridges to receive attention are on minor routes.

"This is an extremely innovative program we're attempting – I don't know of any other transportation department in the nation tackling its bridges so aggressively – and I'm excited to see how the contracting industry will respond," said MoDOT Director Pete Rahn. "There are more than 10,000 bridges on Missouri's state highway system, and too many of them need work. Rather than improve just a handful every year while the rest continue to wear down, we need to do something dramatic to get them in good shape quickly." Of the 800 bridges slated for repairs, 29 are in the Meramec Region—11 in District 5 and 18 in District 9. More info is online at www.modot.org/safeandsound/index.htm.

additional capacity for future traffic volumes," Johnson explained. "The new, wider roadway along with the new bridge will create a safer, more efficient route for those traveling between Rolla and Salem."

Johnson said the entire project is scheduled to be complete before the end of 2006. The project was completed by the McAninch Corporation at a total cost of \$15,387,076.38.

"The Highway 72 project is a perfect example of how the planning framework process—that involves local leaders—works," said Richard Cavender, executive director of the Meramec Regional Planning Commission. "This project was brought to the TAC and determined to be the top priority in District 9. MRPC agreed and shared that with District 9, who listened, and the state highway commission listened."

In Memory . . .

TAC member Charlie Walls of St. James passed away on Nov. 11, 2006, after a brief illness. Charlie had served as a Phelps County representative. He owned a St. James business and was a 17-year member of the city council. He was 51 years old.

On Dec. 11, 2006, Ray Vickery of Columbia, formerly of Salem, passed away at the age of 67. Vickery, former owner and publisher of *The Salem News*, served as the first chairman of the MRPC TAC in 1994. He was instrumental in shaping the committee in its early years. His stepson, Don Dodd, now serves on the TAC representing Dent County. The TAC remembered both Walls and Vickery with a moment of silence in their honor at the Dec. 14 TAC meeting.

Transportation Issues

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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The Meramec Region's Transportation Advisory Committee was formed in August 1994 to advise the Meramec Regional Planning Commission on regional transportation issues and priorities and to work closely with the Missouri Department of Transportation. The TAC is comprised of three appointees from each of Meramec's eight counties. The TAC meets every other month at MRPC, 4 Industrial Drive, St. James. The meetings are open to the public. For more information or to report a transportation need or issue, contact MRPC at (573) 265-2993.