

Transportation Issues

A publication of the
Meramec Regional
Planning Commission
Transportation Advisory Committee



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

Spring 2006

Highways 63, 50 projects make first cut in statewide process

Three projects in the Meramec Region—Highway 63 in Maries and Osage counties, Highway 50 in Osage County and Interstate 44—have made the short-list for further consideration in MoDOT’s statewide major project prioritization process. Because of limited funds, no construction projects are considered this year—only studies and design work.

At the first of two statewide meetings held April 27 in Jefferson City, MoDOT District 5 Engineer Roger Schwartze told local leaders and planning partners from around the state that an environmental improvement study was needed on Highway 63 in Maries/Osage counties before any other work could be considered, and that while environmental work was completed on Highway 50 in Osage County, design work was needed. Additionally, District 9 Engineer Tom Stehn also encouraged state leaders to make the Highway 63 project in Maries and Osage counties a top priority because Highway 63 is the state’s only major north-south corridor, and the Maries-Osage counties section was hampering the overall progress of the statewide corridor.

The Interstate 44 project would be a needs and purpose study, the first step in considering major improvements to the 50-year-old roadway.

In all, presentations were made on 46 projects



MRPC Director Richard Cavender, center, discusses projects with other planning partners and MoDOT District 5 Engineer Roger Schwartze during the April 27 statewide projects prioritization meeting.

statewide. When the ranking was finalized, 19 projects were determined to be high priorities and will move forward for further consideration. The Highway 63 project in Maries and Osage counties ranked second in the state, behind an interchange design study in the Kansas City area at 435 and I-70. District 9’s Highway 63 project ranked seventh. The I-44 project was No. 11, and the Highway 50 project in Osage County ranked 15 out of 19.

“We are pleased with the support shown for High-

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Five-year program available for review

Missouri's proposed five-year transportation improvement program is now available for public review. The Missouri Department of Transportation's construction program lists all transportation projects planned by state and regional planning agencies for fiscal years 2007-2011.

"Planning partners – including regional planning commissions and their TACs – have identified and prioritized projects and then worked with the district offices to determine the most pressing needs based on the funds available," said Richard Cavender, MRPC executive director.

The draft 2007-2011 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program includes more than 820 highway and bridge projects totaling approximately \$5.4 billion over the next five years. If MoDOT and statewide planning partners identify additional highway and bridge projects, they will be presented publicly prior to final STIP approval.

The draft STIP also provides approximately \$0.7 billion for other modes of transportation and approximately \$0.7 billion for city and county transportation programs, totaling \$6.8 billion available over the five-year period.

Beginning May 10, the program will also be available on MoDOT's website – www.modot.org – and at MoDOT's district offices around the state. The formal public comment period ends June 27.

MoDOT offers construction map, interactive web site for motorists traveling I-44

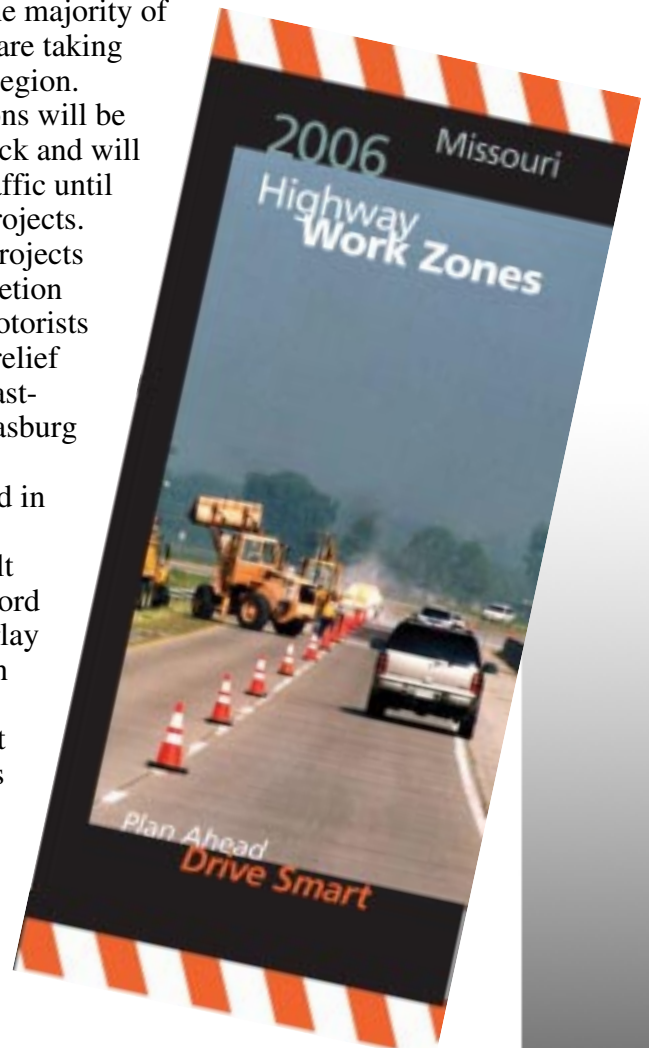
If you're planning a trip on Interstate 44 soon, you need to allow some extra time. Currently there are 27 construction projects taking place on I-44 between St. Louis and Joplin. The majority of those—nine to be exact—are taking place in the Meramec Region.

Work at some locations will be going on around the clock and will require head-to-head traffic until the completion of the projects.

The majority of the projects are not slated for completion until late in the year. Motorists have already felt some relief with the reopening of eastbound I-44 between Leasburg and Cuba. Three more projects are slated to end in the coming months—St. Robert to Jerome asphalt overlay; Rolla to Crawford County westbound overlay and Bourbon to Sullivan eastbound overlay.

In light of the amount of construction projects throughout the state, MoDOT has published a construction map which details construction projects with expected completion dates and alternate routes.

You can request a free copy by calling MoDOT's toll-free phone number at 1-888-ASK-MODOT or you can download a copy at www.modot.org. Travelers may also check on the status of construction throughout the state via MoDOT's website. The site also offers a free interactive construction map, which will help motorists plan their routes.



Would you prefer to receive the TAC newsletter by email?

Send us a message and we'll put you on the email list.

press@meramecregion.org

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 June 8, Aug. 10, Oct. 12 and Dec. 14 at 4 p.m. at MRPC, 4 Industrial Drive in St. James. All meetings are open to the public.

NEW MISSOURI AIRPORT DIRECTORY AND TRAVEL GUIDE AVAILABLE: The 2006-2007 Missouri airport and travel guide is now available to the public. This flight-planning tool provides facility information to pilots and users of Missouri's public use airports. Directories are free at most local airports in Missouri or by contacting MoDOT's customer service center at 1-888-ASK-MODOT. It can also be viewed at www.modot.org/othertransportation/aviation/airportdirectory.htm.

NEW ASSISTANT ENGINEER: MoDOT has named Eric Schroeter as assistant district engineer for its Central District Office in Jefferson City. He succeeds Gary Thomas who retired after a 39-year career with MoDOT.

TAC: More funding needed

The Missouri Department of Transportation is spending about \$1.4 billion a year on transportation projects. That number will drop by nearly half by 2009 when the state begins paying back the bonds that have jump started the state transportation improvements program, and that concerns local leaders and members of the Meramec Regional Transportation Advisory Committee.

"There should be a warning sign on the highway now," State Rep. Charlie Schlottach of Owensville told members of the MRPC TAC, during its meeting Feb. 9. "If we let this go too far, we're going to hit a big pothole."

Schlottach said replacing the revenue was not something Missouri was going to be able to do alone. "We need the federal government to be a partner like it's never been before," he acknowledged.

The state legislature is looking at new ways to advance transportation projects and is considering a public/private partnership to build a new bridge over the Mississippi River at St. Louis. He said that increasing transportation revenue to the level needed will most likely require a vote of the people.

TAC members, for several meetings, have been discussing the need for increased transportation revenues statewide and say that MoDOT has done a good job improving the state's transportation system with the funds available. But if those funds fall off, and projects slow down and go undone, the public will not be happy, said TAC Chairman Willard "Decky" Finn, of Vienna.

"Let's not wait until we are back to \$800 million," Finn said. "The people will be mad then, when the work stops!"

Finn said that he would like to see a plan to generate transportation revenue in the near future.

Jim Kleffner, Maries County presiding commissioner, said that it is important to point out the savings that result from transportation improvements. For some time now, Kleffner has encouraged MoDOT, state and regional leaders and TAC members to consider a statewide transportation funding plan. Kleffner says that improving roads actually saves money because it means less wear and tear on vehicles and that the real cost to taxpayers comes when roads are not maintained.

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way 63 and 50," said Richard Cavender, executive director of Meramec Regional Planning Commission. "These two projects are our top two projects, as determined by our Transportation Advisory Committee, and we are pleased that leaders from around the state recognize their importance in our state's overall transportation system."

The next meeting will be by May 19 in Columbia and MoDOT and planning partners will hear additional information on these 19 projects, including costs of the proposed work. The 19 projects will be ranked again, and recommended for funding, based on available dollars. Cavender and Bonnie Prigge, MRPC assistant director, will represent the Meramec Region in the May 19 meeting.

TAC prioritizes enhancement grant requests

After learning about seven enhancement grant applications, the Meramec Region's Transportation Advisory Committee selected projects in the city of Waynesville and the city of Hermann as its top choices.

For the second year, TAC members have prioritized enhancement projects. MRPC will share that information when it assists with the reviews of the projects.

"Unfortunately there is not enough money to fund every request in the state, and this prioritization exercise allows staff to share the collective opinion of the TAC," explained Richard Cavender, MRPC executive director. "If District 9 says that there is only enough money for two projects, we can tell them which two the TAC believes are most important."

The Waynesville project proposes to create a pedestrian trail, incorporating the city's history as part of the 1837 Trail of Tears. Currently the city has begun the process of being certified as part of the National Park Service's Historic Trail System.

Waynesville officials are planning to design and install an exhibit along the trail that commemorates the Trail of Tears encampment in the current Laughlin Park and working with the National Park Service, to construct an interpretive walking exhibit highlighting the Trail of Tears.

The city is also asking for funding to refurbish

Enhancement Projects in the Meramec Region

Rank	Applicant	Project	Dist.
1	Waynesville	Roubidoux enhancement program	9
2	Hermann	Museum, sidewalks	5
3	Westphalia	Main St./Hwy 63 sidewalk	5
4	Potosi/Wash Co.	Hwy 8/E town square, parking lot	9
5	Cuba	Route 66 sidewalk/bike trail	9
6	UMR	Pedestrian tunnel under Hwy. 63	9
7	Rolla	Add 5.13 miles to Deible Bikepath	9

the Roubidoux Bridge, which is along the original Route 66. Enhancements to the bridge would include the installation of vintage lighting on the bridge as well as refurbishing the bridge with sandblasting and repair of the existing

sidewalk. The project is located in MoDOT District 9.

Hermann officials teamed up with Historic Preservation of Hermann, LLC, to propose the creation off a transportation museum at the site of an Amtrak station on the corner of Wharf and Gutenberg Streets with transportation enhancements, such as sidewalks and lighting, extending from the museum into the Historic Hermann downtown area, including Gutenberg, First and Market Streets.

Other requests came from the city of Westphalia, Washington County and Potosi, city of Cuba, University of Missouri-Rolla and the city of Rolla.

Currently \$1.73 million exists in funding for projects in District 9. District 5 has substantially more funding at \$3.03 million, but also contains more urban areas such as Jefferson City and Columbia.

The district enhancement teams, which includes representatives from regional planning commissions, are currently in the process of rating applications and will submit their recommendations to the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission for its September Meeting.

Transportation Issues

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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.

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