



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

Delbert Scott
28th Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 416
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

**A Weekly Column for the
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**Contact: Debbie Poire
(573) 751-8793**

Governor Signs Legislation to Upgrade Hundreds of Missouri Bridges

JEFFERSON CITY – Governor Blunt signed House Bill 2 this week, one of two measures approved by lawmakers during the special session that concluded last week. I talked about House Bill 1 in last week's column – the economic development package that will help create thousands of new jobs in Missouri – and I want to address HB 2 this week. HB 2 changed state law to allow MoDOT to move forward with its Safe & Sound Bridge Improvement Project.

The Safe & Sound Bridge Improvement Project was included in a transportation bill that failed to win the approval of both chambers in the last session. However, this program was too important to put off until the next legislative session in January, especially in light of the tragic bridge collapse in Minneapolis August 1st.

The Safe & Sound Bridge Project is designed to improve 802 bridges throughout the state during the next five years, and to maintain those bridges in good condition for 25 years after repairs are completed. The total cost of the project is expected to be between \$400-600 million. State law only allowed contractors to be bonded for the full \$400-600 million over a 30-year period. However, the surety bond market would not allow that large of a bond for that amount of time, so MoDOT needed the legislature to change the law so a fraction of the total cost of the project could be bonded to get the project moving forward.

The main purpose of a surety bond is to protect the taxpayer by ensuring the construction project is completed. Since MoDOT would not make payments to the contractor until all of the construction is completed, the financing structure of the Safe & Sound Project provides taxpayers with a 25-year guarantee on the work being done.

There are 86 bridges in the 28th Senate District included in MoDOT's Safe & Sound Bridge Improvement Project, including 24 in Pettis County and 25 in Henry County. The other counties in the district have about a half-dozen or fewer bridges included in the project list. For a complete listing of all of the bridges in your county, visit

<http://www.modot.mo.gov/safeandsound>.

The Safe & Sound Project does not answer the overall funding problem for MoDOT, but it is a big step in the right direction. The project takes care of 802 bridges, but Missouri has more than 1,000 bridges that are considered deficient. That does not mean those bridges are unsafe, only that they are in need of repair.

On a related note, there are 11 bridges in Missouri similar in design to the I-35 Mississippi River Bridge that collapsed in Minneapolis, including the Hurricane Deck Bridge on Route 5 at the Lake of the Ozarks. On August 2, the day after the bridge disaster in Minnesota, Governor Blunt asked MoDOT to inspect those 11 bridges and that process is underway. Inspections were completed on the Hurricane Deck Bridge August 8 and no major structural findings were reported.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please feel free to contact me at 573-751-8793 or by e-mail at: delbertscott@senate.mo.us.

Senator Delbert Scott represents the people of Barton, Benton, Cedar, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Pettis, Polk and St. Clair counties in the Missouri Senate.