

Column from Sen. Matt Bartle for  
week of April 04, 2005

Many things passed by the legislature in Jefferson City go unnoticed by the citizens of the state. There are literally hundreds of bills filed each session that propose to do all kinds of things. Some bills, if passed, would have a substantial impact on our daily lives while others would have very little effect at all. This session alone there are bills that you'll probably never hear about in the news. They allow the state to convey small plots of land, they get rid of expired sections of law or they name building and bridges.

However, some bills and issues in Jefferson City, while they may not make as many headlines as other issues, have important effects on our everyday lives. I have found that highways are one of the most direct ways that actions taken in Jefferson City affect people in my district and people care deeply about the condition of their roads.

Considering the interest people have in highway and transportation issues, I want to tell you about two issues. First is the plan of the Missouri Department of Transportation (MODOT) to implement the "Smooth Roads Initiative." Thanks to the decision of Missouri voters last year to approve Amendment 3 (which provided that more of Missouri's budget would be designated for transportation projects) MODOT is moving ahead with a practical plan to repave, repaint stripes and add safety improvements (rumble strips, better guardrails and safer shoulders) to 2,200 miles of state highways.

With such progress comes the frustration of having our daily commute slowed down by road construction. We in the legislature have expressed to MODOT officials our wish that they proceed with these necessary improvement with common sense. For instance, that they clearly communicate information on road construction projects to motorists on signs near the work zone; that where possible they make the improvement during hours that are more convenient for drivers and that they take remove things like the traffic cones that impede the flow of traffic at times they are not actively working on the project.

In exchange for the common sense approach and hard work of MODOT employees it is only fair that we provide proper protection for them as they work on these projects. Legislation filed this session creates stiffer penalties and fines for endangering a highway worker in a work zone. For example, the bill would make it a felony if a highway worker is killed or injured by a reckless driver. Certain driving offenses would be a Class A misdemeanor even if no injury results. In addition, if a person is convicted of speeding or passing in a highway construction zone while a worker is present, the bill proposes a \$300 fine on top of the regular fine.

It is important that we as a state keep our roads safe and modern and that we protect the men and women we ask to make these improvements. These proposals are important steps in the right direction.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by e-mail at [matt\\_bartle@senate.state.mo.us](mailto:matt_bartle@senate.state.mo.us) or by phone at (888) 711-9278.

