



THE STOUFFER REPORT

Senator Bill Stouffer
Senate District 21

Capitol Building, Room 332
Jefferson City, MO 65101

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Interstate 70 Expansion Plan will Boost Safety and Missouri Economy

Bump! Bump! Rattle! Rattle! Most everyone has had this feeling if they have driven Missouri roads in the past few years. However, it is getting better. New Missouri Department of Transportation Director Pete Rahn has stepped up to the challenge in the past 18 months to make our roads smoother and safer. But we still have a lot to do to move Missouri back into the running for the best roads in the nation.

With Amendment 3 money there have been 2,200 smoother miles of road in Missouri. More than 85 percent of Missouri citizens live within 10 miles of these major roadways. This program will be completed one year earlier than expected. Fifty-five projects have been accelerated because of Amendment 3 money and another 39 projects not on the five-year STIP have been identified and will be completed in the future. MoDot has made progress and is gaining the confidence of Missourians again.

However, Director Rahn had some bad news for Missouri citizens. In five years, money for construction projects will go from \$1.4 billion to \$805 million. With the I-70's 50th Anniversary coming up, which was only supposed to last 20 years, and I-44 right behind it, Missourians need to start thinking about how to pay for improving these roads again.

New innovative ideas are needed; one that I am sponsoring is a public-private partnership (PPP). This allows a private company to build a bridge in St. Louis and charge a toll to cross the bridge. This takes no Missouri money. Also, as many may know, I don't like toll roads. However, there is another economic option available to drivers—either take the faster bridge for a small fee, or take the current, slower, route. PPP's are good for projects the state can't afford, but needs. This bridge is needed for I-70 traffic coming in and out of our state, but it probably won't be built for another 20 years without an innovative funding solution.

As the chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee, it is my duty to ensure we safely move people, goods and services in this state as efficiently as possible. Our state's biggest priority right now is our two major interstates. My plan for I-70 and I-44 is to completely take them out of the formula. These roads could be funded separately so the costs for their maintenance can go to our lettered and smaller roads, which are not seeing the attention they need even with Amendment 3. My dream for I-70 and I-44 is to have 8 lanes—four for cars and four for trucks. This would make the highway safer for all drivers.

The bad news is the consumers will have to foot the bill. Public officials are looking into options on how we fund the rebuilding of I-70 and I-44; whether it is through a sales tax, gas tax, tolling or other innovative approaches.

No legislation has been introduced for this project this year, but start talking to your friends and neighbors about these options in building an adequate statewide transportation system. These two interstates are a slow drip that is costing the rest of the state in failing to meet our transportation needs.

If you have questions or comments about this issue or any other please feel free to call my office toll free (866) 768-3987 or email me at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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