



Alter's Angle

A LEGISLATIVE UPDATE
FROM SEN. BILL ALTER



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Good News for Neighborhoods, Vehicle Owners and Jefferson County Commuters

In the fifth week of session, I am already seeing developments that hold a lot of promise for the people of the 22nd Senate District and the rest of Missouri. Because people have a right to a reasonably peaceful living environment, I have introduced legislation that will allow county governments to adopt ordinances dealing with neighborhood dog problems or when a nearby facility is hosting an activity, such as a concert, that results in an unreasonably loud level of noise.

Because local governments frequently use eminent domain laws to turn residential areas into commercial zones, some homeowners end up living next door to office buildings, retail stores and entertainment venues in which loud activities frequently occur. Under my bill, cities can adopt ordinances regarding tolerable decibel levels and times at which noise beyond those decibels is legally punishable.

One of my bills significantly advanced in the legislative process this week. The bill I am co-sponsoring that makes emissions regulations more consumer-friendly was approved by the Senate Transportation Committee this week. Senate Bill 583 lets vehicle owners get their emissions tested by qualified safety inspectors at private auto-repair shops, rather than having to go to one of the few state-funded testing stations. The legislation also exempts vehicles less than two years old from the process, and vehicles manufactured before 1996 just have to get a gas-cap pressure test. The measure now goes to the Senate floor for consideration by the full body. I do not expect the bill to meet any opposition.

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On another district-specific issue, representatives from the Metro public transportation system held a public meeting earlier this week to discuss the level of community interest for extended bus service through Jefferson County. My chief of staff, Gary Romine, attended the meeting to show support for the proposed MetroLink I-55 Mehlville Express route.

If at least 60 passengers a day would use the new bus system, it would be cost-effective enough for the express route to be added. Considering there was standing room only at the meeting, it looks promising that the buses will begin running this September. This would be a great opportunity for those who commute to downtown St. Louis for work, shopping or other reasons, because they could save money on gas, decrease wear-and-tear on their vehicles and eliminate the hassle of finding parking.

Metro's current monthly passes cost \$55; commuters can opt to pay \$1.75 per trip. Because service to Jefferson County would be a significant system extension, area commuters would pay a \$1 surcharge per round trip. The most southern stop on the route would be at the MoDOT parking lot on Richardson Road, and the buses would make several stops on the northbound trip to downtown. The transit system would operate for three-hour periods in the morning and evening, with trips operating every 15 or 30 minutes.

You can read about the extension of the 40X 1-55 Mehlville Express at www.metrostlouis.org. If you want to give input on the proposal, you can record a message by calling 1-800-923-3029 or e-mail metroredefined@metrostlouis.org.

I will let you know of any developments with this initiative. In the meantime, feel free to contact me to express your thoughts or concerns so that I may most effectively represent you in the Missouri Senate.

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Sen. Alter represents northern Jefferson County.