



MISSOURI SENATE

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**A Column for the Week
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Bridge Renovation Plan to Benefit Bootheel

JEFFERSON CITY — Missouri motorists recently received good news with the announcement that most of the state's worst bridges will be repaired or replaced under a new initiative planned by the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT). The Safe & Sound Bridge Improvement Plan targets 800 bridges in poor condition to be improved between 2007 and 2012 under an unprecedented plan to award a single contract for the renovations. Although the bridges selected for reconstruction will not be chosen until later this year, many bridges in the 25th Senate District are under consideration.

Missouri's state highway system contains 10,224 bridges, more than 1,000 of which are in poor or serious condition. The Safe & Sound initiative will take a novel approach to renovating 800 of these deteriorating bridges. To get such a large number of bridges fixed in a short amount of time, MoDOT will seek to award a single contract to design and build the bridge upgrades and maintain the bridges in good condition for at least 25 years.

The private contractor or contractors who take the job would finance the work, and the state would then use part of its annual federal bridge funds to repay the contractors over time. The Safe & Sound Bridge Improvement Plan is expected to cost between \$400 million and \$600 million. A list of bridges to be improved is expected to be complete late this year, with bids submitted and a winning contractor approved by the summer of 2007. MoDOT has chosen this new approach because the gasoline taxes that fund road building and maintenance are not keeping pace with rising construction costs.

The state will not choose which bridges to rebuild until later this year; however, several in the 25th District are being considered. Candidates include the bridge on Rt. TT near Ten Mile County Road in Butler County, bridges on U.S. Highways 60 and 62 in New Madrid County, several bridges along U.S. 60 in Stoddard County, as well as bridges in Dunklin, Pemiscot and Wayne counties.

This new plan will improve roadway safety throughout the state, and I am looking forward to seeing this proposal advance in the coming months.

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Senator Robert Mayer represents the people of Wayne, Ripley, Butler, Stoddard, New Madrid, Pemiscot and Dunklin counties in the Missouri Senate.