



SENATOR MATT BARTLE

District 8 – Capitol Building, Room 319 Jefferson City, MO 65101

**Column for Week of:
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Work on Roads and Highways is Not Complete

Missourians have seen vast improvements in our state's roads and highways in recent years, but much work remains to be done. This message was highlighted last week when Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) Director Pete Rahn spoke to state lawmakers during the "State of Transportation" address about the need to continue Missouri's commitment to improving transportation. Although recent efforts have improved transportation safety, funding for these projects will drop precipitously in the next few years. Missouri must continue providing adequate funding for transportation improvements.

MoDOT engineers have been working hard to upgrade our roads with new funds approved by Missouri voters in November 2004. The Smooth Roads Initiative, which was completed last year, has brought up to "good condition" 2,200 miles of Missouri's busiest roads and highways. With smoother roads, brighter center stripes, improved signs and rumble strips, and more median guard rails, an estimated 173 fewer people lost their lives in 2006. New projects will focus on Missouri bridges and additional roadway improvements.

However, Missouri needs to keep looking ahead if we are to continue to make progress on our transportation system. MoDOT's \$1.3 billion road-construction program takes a hit in 2010, when funding will drop to \$569 million, which is less than the funding level before the 2004 vote. Interstates 70 and 44 are overburdened and crumbling from their foundations, and they need to be rebuilt.

At current funding levels we can barely maintain the status quo for our highway system, and it is clear there is no way we can bring I-70 into the modern era without a bold, new plan. As a member of the Senate Transportation Committee, I will continue working to improve Missouri's roads and highways and to propose "outside the box" solutions, such as toll roads that will truly bring I-70 into the 21st century. The bottom line is that we cannot afford to rest on our accomplishments. We must finish what we have started.

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.mo.gov or by phone at (888) 711-9278.

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