



# SENATOR MATT BARTLE

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

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## **Missouri Interstates Require Major Overhaul**

One of my highest priorities is bringing about real progress in giving Missourians a safer, more modern transportation system, especially a rebuilt and expanded Interstate 70. This week I would like to continue my discussion of this important topic.

Every day our lives intersect in one way or another with our state government. Whether it is renewing a drivers license, taking advantage of the education offered through the public school system or going to the voting booth, our lives are directly affected. However, there is probably no other way we are impacted by the policies of our state than in the area of transportation. We each drive hundreds or thousands of miles every year on highways built and maintained by the Missouri Department of Transportation. Every time we or our families hit the road, our safety is directly affected by the quality of the roads we travel. Unfortunately, some of our highways are in desperate need of rebuilding.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the case of I-70 and I-44. Since construction began in 1956, Missouri has not significantly updated the infrastructure of these vital thoroughfares. Although we spend millions of dollars each year on superficial touch-ups, such as repaving, we are essentially driving on the same highways that were built 50 years ago. Many portions of these roads are strained beyond capacity, with deteriorating pavement and inadequate interchanges.

This week, my colleagues and I on the Senate Transportation Committee heard compelling testimony as to just how desperate the situation is. I-70 is particularly overburdened. When it was constructed, the highway had a 20-year life expectancy and was built to carry 20,000 vehicles per day, 15 percent of which would be heavy trucks. It has been 50 years, and the highway now carries 40,000 vehicles each day on some stretches, nearly 40 percent of which are trucks.

I-44 is also problematic for motorists. The highway, which also had a 20-year life expectancy, averages between 20,000 and 70,000 vehicles per day, a similar proportion of which are trucks. These high traffic averages are unsustainable, and traffic levels continue to rise.

Traffic is expected to double by the year 2030, and truck traffic on I-70 is growing each year at twice the pace of all vehicles. Of course, more traffic means more accidents. According to estimates, the number of accidents occurring along many stretches of the interstate will double in the next 30 years if no changes are made in its design.

It should be one of our highest priorities to ensure that Missourians driver on safe, modern highways that are not so overcrowded that a driver must literally compete for space with large semi trucks. In spite of repaving efforts and other superficial changes to I-70 and I-44, these highways are overburdened and unsafe for Missouri motorists and are destined to get even worse. They have outlived their life expectancy and we can no longer afford quick fixes to long-term problems. We have to look to the future. Currently, lawmakers are considering a number of proposals to rebuild our interstates, including legislation to creating an eight-lane system on I-70 and I-44. New ideas have to be explored if we are to bring Missouri's interstate highways into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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](mailto:matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov) or by phone at (888) 711-9278.

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