



PRESS RELEASE



State Senator Wes Shoemyer – 18th District

State Capitol – Room 434
201 West Capital Avenue
Jefferson City, MO 65101-6806
Phone: (573) 751-7852

LAWMAKERS APPROVE CHANGES TO FAST-TRACK SAFE & SOUND BRIDGE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

JEFFERSON CITY – Sen. Wes Shoemyer (D-Clarence) says House Bill 2, approved during the special session and recently signed by Gov. Blunt, changed state law to allow MoDOT to move forward with its Safe & Sound Bridge Improvement Project.

The Safe & Sound Bridge Improvement Project was included in a transportation bill that failed to win the approval of both chambers in the last session. However, Shoemyer says this program was too important to put off until the next legislative session in January, especially in light of the tragic bridge collapse in Minneapolis August 1st.

“Anybody who has driven over the bridges in the 18th Senate district knows a lot of them are in need of repair, and that’s true with bridges across Missouri,” Shoemyer said. “But the tragedy in Minneapolis early last month showed us we need to start fixing our bridges right now.”

The Safe & Sound Bridge Project is designed to improve 802 bridges throughout the state during the next five years, and to maintain those bridges in good condition for 25 years after repairs are completed. The total cost of the project is expected to be between \$400-600 million. State law only allowed contractors to be bonded for the full \$400-600 million over a 30-year period. However, the surety bond market would not allow that large of a bond for that amount of time, so MoDOT needed the legislature to change the law so a fraction of the total cost of the project could be bonded to get the project moving forward.

The main purpose of a surety bond is to protect the taxpayer by ensuring the construction project is completed. Since MoDOT would not make payments to the contractor until all of the construction is completed, the financing structure of the Safe & Sound Project provides taxpayers with a 25-year guarantee on the work being done.

There are 84 bridges in the 18th Senate District included in MoDOT’s Safe & Sound Bridge Improvement Project, including 11 bridges in Pike County and 9 in Adair County. The other counties in the district have about a half-dozen or fewer bridges included in the project list. For a complete listing of all of the bridges in your county, visit <http://www.modot.mo.gov/safeandsound>.

Shoemyer says the Safe & Sound Project does not answer the overall funding problem for MoDOT, but says it is a big step in the right direction. The project takes care of 802 bridges, but Missouri has more than 1,000 bridges that are considered deficient. That does not mean those bridges are unsafe, only that they are in need of repair.

On a related note, there are 11 bridges in Missouri similar in design to the I-35 Mississippi River Bridge that collapsed in Minneapolis, including the Hurricane Deck Bridge on Route 5 at the Lake of the Ozarks. On August 2, the day after the bridge disaster in Minnesota, Governor Blunt asked MoDOT to inspect those 11 bridges and that process is underway. Inspections were completed on the Hurricane Deck Bridge August 8 and no major structural findings were reported.