



Senator
Bill Stouffer

DISTRICT 21

Senator Bill Stouffer – Cultivating Rural Missouri.

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The Stouffer Report: Missouri Roads Are Getting Better

MoDOT continues to show it is serious about improving Missouri's roads as soon as possible. The latest proof comes from a national group that investigates road conditions and the amount of money spent on them.

The Reason Foundation now ranks Missouri 13th in the nation in terms of the value you get for the money you spend on maintaining roads. Their study actually covers the year 2006. In 2005, the Reason Foundation ranked the Show-Me State 17th. In 2004, we were 28th. 2006 marked the year MoDOT finished its "Smoother, Safer, Sooner" campaign, so our ranking will probably improve in the years to come, especially as MoDOT starts to fix 800 bridges throughout the state.

The Reason Foundation released its [17th Annual Report on the Performance of State Highway Systems](#) in early August. They rate the effectiveness and performance of each state in 12 categories, which include highway administrative and maintenance costs, bridge and pavement condition, congestion, and traffic fatalities. Among the points of the report I am proudest of is one targeting rural interstates. Missouri tied several other states for first place in rural interstate condition. Missouri has nearly 800 miles of interstate highway in rural Missouri. These are some of the most heavily-traveled roads in the state. To be first is a high honor.

The Reason Foundation also shows Missouri as being 4th best in the country in administrative cost per mile. This makes Missouri one of the most efficient in managing a highway system. MoDOT director Pete Rahn says they have been able to pare back their administrative costs to around 3 percent of their total operating budget.

The number of fatal accidents in Missouri has been shrinking over the past few years. This also contributes to the higher ranking in the

Reason Foundation's report. In 2006, the state led the country in the number of lives saved with 161 fewer fatalities. Last year, the number fell by another 104 deaths and in 2007, the number of fatalities fell below 1,000 for the first time in 15 years. All indications are Missouri is on track to cut the number of highway deaths even more this year.

Granted, there are some areas where Missouri can improve. The Reason Foundation ranks Missouri 40th in deficient bridges, at 30.5 percent. MoDOT has been working toward fixing 800 bridges in Missouri. MoDOT director Pete Rahn says the "Safe and Sound Bridge" program will make these improvements over a five-year period. The focus will be on many of Missouri's smaller bridges that are around 100 years old. As you might imagine, a lot of these bridges are right here in rural Missouri.

We are off to a great start. MoDOT has managed to turn things around in almost no time at all. We have to look to the future, and we will do that next year when lawmakers come back to Jefferson City to begin the next legislative session. I pray we will be able to find common ground and come up with a way to keep traffic flowing smoothly throughout the Show-Me State.

Senator Stouffer serves the counties of Carroll, Chariton, Cooper, Howard, Lafayette, Macon, Ray, Saline, and a part of Clay.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by e-mail at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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