

Week of June 8, 2009



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[Building Better Bridges](#)

Missouri's numerous creeks, streams and rivers add beauty to our state, but it also results in a large number of bridges in our state. In total number of bridges, Missouri ranks 7th nationwide with 10,249 bridges on the state highway system. Unfortunately, approximately 1,100 of these structures are in poor or serious condition and need significant repairs to meet the Missouri Department of Transportation's (MoDOT) safety standards.

In early 2007, lawmakers approved a massive bridge improvement plan that launched in the fall of 2008. After 13 people died and 145 were injured in the tragic collapse of the Interstate 35 bridge in Minneapolis in August 2007, states across the nation began reassessing the safety of their bridges. The tragedy put added attention and urgency on the matter here in the Show-Me State and now we have made significant progress with MoDOT's Safe & Sound Bridge Improvement Program, a two-phase program to improve 802 of the state's lowest-rated bridges by Oct. 31, 2014.

The remaining 300 bridges with low ratings not included in the program are inspected on a regular basis, as are all MoDOT bridges. If an inspection reveals a maintenance issue that needs to be addressed immediately, it will be. Some of these bridges will be repaired through other projects in MoDOT's five-year transportation improvement plan, and some as funding becomes available.

Safe & Sound was originally envisioned as one large design-build-finance-maintain project. However, the nation's financial market situation in 2008 made the program unaffordable. In September 2008, the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission directed MoDOT to move forward with the program in its current form, with 554 complete bridge replacements included in a single design-build package and the remaining 248 bridges marked for rehabilitation contracted using a modified design-bid-

build approach. This decision saved more than \$500 million and now the total price tag of the Safe & Sound program is estimated to be \$700 million, all without raising taxes!

Some of the 248 bridges identified for rehabilitation are already under construction. The bridges are being put out for bid in groups according to location, type or size to expedite the design and construction process. The other 554 bridges are scheduled for replacement and have been packaged in a single design-build contract that was awarded last month. The selected construction team has committed to complete the project by Dec. 31, 2013, which is 10 months earlier than the required deadline, and at a cost of \$487 million. Average bridge closure for 493 bridges will be 45 days under the proposal—nearly half of what a normal MoDOT bridge project would take. The construction team is also committed to using a number of Missouri-based sub-contractors and materials suppliers to deliver the project. It is estimated that Safe & Sound will directly or indirectly support more than 5,300 jobs.

In the 31st Senate District, 56 bridges are included among the 802 that are part of the program: This includes 8 in Bates County, 20 in Cass County, 17 in Johnson County and 11 in Vernon County. Two Johnson County bridges included in Safe & Sound are already complete. I recently attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the completion of Bridge 7080 on Route ZZ over Panther Creek. The 121-foot bridge, originally built in 1958, received a superstructure replacement. Work began on the bridge on April 30, and was finished on May 22—an impressive 23-day construction schedule. Also renovated under the program is Bridge 7312 on Route OO over Honey Creek. The project took 23 days with construction beginning on April 13, and completed on May 5. Like Bridge 7080, this 83-foot bridge originally built in 1960 required a superstructure replacement.

At the time of this writing, 28 bridges have been completed and 37 are currently under construction, leaving 737 bridges to go across the state. To monitor the progress of bridge construction, visit MoDOT's Safe & Sound website at www.modot.org/safeandsound. There you will find a progress meter that monitors daily how many bridges are under construction, how many have been completed and how many are left to reach the 802-bridge goal.

As always, please feel free to contact me or my staff with any questions or concerns at any time. We look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions and trying to answer any questions you may have. You can reach us by phone at 866-277-0882 (toll-free) or 573-751-2272, or by fax at 573-526-7381.

Senator David Pearce serves Bates, Cass, Johnson and Vernon counties in the 31st State Senate District.



Senator David Pearce (fourth from left) at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the completion of Bridge 7080 on Route ZZ over Panther Creek in Johnson County.

Contact Information

Capitol Office
State Capitol Building
Room 419
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Website:
<http://www.senate.mo.gov/pearce>

Phone Number:
866.277.0882 (toll-free)
573.751.2272

Fax:
573.526.7381