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The Stouffer Report: *Missouri's Transportation Picture Improves*

Missouri has turned its highway system around dramatically in only a few, short years. But, there are some folks who wonder how long this trend can continue.

A think tank called the [Reason Foundation](#) recently released its [19th annual highway report](#). This report shows how states have made progress over the past few years, with Missouri toward the top of the list. My hat goes off to [MoDOT](#). The folks there have worked tirelessly over the past decade to improve roads throughout the state.

According to the Reason Foundation's annual highway report, Missouri showed the biggest improvement in 2008, moving from 24th place to eighth place, in terms of cost-effectiveness and state highway performance. Reason Foundation ranks states in 11 categories to compile the overall numbers. Missouri was number one in rural interstate condition, but 38th in narrow rural lanes and 40th for its bridges. Fortunately, MoDOT is working on the worst bridges in the state — through its Safe and Sound Bridge Improvement Project — which should help our

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ranking next year.

For the past five or six years, we have been hearing how the federal government is backing out of the transportation funding business. We are starting to see the effects of this decision. Even though the president talked about a \$50 billion plan to improve roads and bridges throughout the country, most of the projects that would be included in this would be special perks for certain federal lawmakers and would not create long-term, high-paying jobs.

As the federal government moves away from highway funding, another question comes to mind: What should the federal government's role be? My thinking is the feds should concentrate on national projects, like improving interstates or even thinking about adding new interstate highways, while states, counties and cities should focus on their respective infrastructure. The interstate highway system was started in 1956. At the time, it was designed to last 30 years. Since then, nothing has been done by the federal government to improve or expand on it.

We have made great strides on Missouri's roads over the past 10 years. Over the next year or two, we will have to begin looking seriously at how we will continue to pay for the improvements that still need to be made and new infrastructure that will have to be built. There are private-public partnerships that have been extended by the Missouri General Assembly and other methods that do not require more money from the hard-working men and women of Missouri.

Again, I applaud the effort MoDOT continues to make and look forward to the conclusion of their [Safe and Sound Bridge Improvement Program](#), which will improve the quality of 800 bridges throughout our state and make Missouri a better place for visitors, citizens and the hundreds of

thousands who travel our state's roads each and every day.

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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