



# View from the Chair

Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission

## MoDOT is Committed to Diversity, Workforce Development

December 10, 2014



Dear «GreetingLine»

Funding for transportation, if not on the lips, is certainly on the minds of all we meet. Yet as the Commission continues to examine the funding issue, we know we must maintain focus on other core goals as well, including development of a robust and diverse workforce and maintenance of an integrated system to support freight. Both of those issues were addressed as the Commission met last week in the festive halls of Kansas City's Union Station which was decked out for the holidays.

Lester Woods, MoDOT's director of external civil rights, told us about community roundtable discussions MoDOT has held in Kansas City and St. Louis to update local leaders on MoDOT's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program, On-the-Job Training program and a newly proposed Contractor Workforce program.

Mike Hughes of the Sanctuary Workshop explained how his organization seeks to provide the unemployed and under-served with critical skills that can lead to job opportunities and job retention. As an example, the Sanctuary Workshop was successful in bringing such disadvantaged individuals into the heavy construction industry during construction of the Christopher "Kit" Bond Bridge.

I noted that Amendment 7 passed in the Kansas City area largely because the minority community, which would bear much of the brunt of a sales tax, could see from MoDOT's past efforts how their investment in transportation could lead to economic opportunity.

We are committed to working with the minority community, minority and majority contractor associations, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, state and federal officials and residents to facilitate diversity and inclusion in the heavy highway construction industry throughout the state, not only because it is the right thing to do – but because it is smart business.

We also heard presentations on the need for additional investment in transportation, including in the area of freight development. Michael Collins, president and CEO of the Port Authority of Kansas City, spoke about efforts to revitalize the port and barge traffic on the Missouri River. Mark Van Loh, director of aviation for Kansas City, explained freight movement through KCI. And, the Civic Council's Scott Smith discussed the Heartland Civic Collaborative to create a regional alliance with St. Louis, Des Moines and Omaha to generate economic opportunities for the Midwest – all of which will rely on transportation resources.

The Heavy Constructors Association and the Mid-America Regional Council underlined the long-term importance of transportation investment to economic well being on all levels – from employment opportunities for individuals to a regional freight corridor.

Which brings me back to where I began. The drop in our construction budget over the coming years is going to mean we cannot improve the system, large parts of it will deteriorate significantly and Missourians will notice a corresponding reduction in services. Right now the Commission has MoDOT staff working to identify how we are going to live within a \$325 million budget which is projected by 2017, those roads and bridges which are most vulnerable and where the reduction in services will occur. Look for details of their work in future "Views."

So as we get ready to close out one year and begin a new one, let's do so on a positive note: Kansas City was considered the part of the state least likely to approve Amendment 7, but through much work by the Commission, MoDOT and its partners, the measure carried in Kansas City. Now we must improve on this success with continued education and constructive ideas – both old and new – throughout our entire state.

Let's work together to make 2015 a great year for Missouri, its transportation system and its citizens.

Wishing you a happy holiday season and a safe and blessed new year,

Stephen R. Miller  
Chairman

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