

The Blue Ribbon Citizens Committee on Missouri's Transportation Needs Committee Meeting Minutes – May 21, 2012

The May 21 meeting of the Blue Ribbon Citizens Committee on Missouri's Transportation Needs was held at MoDOT's Northwest District office in St. Joseph.

The meeting was called to order by Bill McKenna, co chair of the Blue Ribbon Committee.

Committee members in attendance were:

Ben Jones
Estil Fretwell
Joe DeLong
Becky Cleveland
Brian Meisel

There were 92 persons from the general public in attendance. Special guests included Commissioner Steve Miller from the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission and former commissioner Dave Gach. Also in attendance were Senators Bill Stouffer (R-Napton) and Rob Schaaf (R-St. Joseph).

Opening comments were made by chairman McKenna on the importance of the creation of the Blue Ribbon Citizens Committee. Mr. McKenna stated the objective of the committee is to look into ways to improve safety and promote economic development and identify possible solutions to pay for future transportation improvements.

Roberta Broeker, MoDOT's Chief Financial Officer, began the hearing by providing the committee members with a national and statewide perspective of future funding for transportation. Ms. Broeker said "we have a problem and there's a rough road ahead." The 50 year old model for funding transportation – via fuel taxes – is broken. The gas tax on the state and national levels have both been unchanged for the last 20 years.

In fact, just keeping funding at existing levels does nothing to get the state ahead; maintaining current funding levels takes the state backwards. The federal highway trust fund is virtually dependent on the fuel tax and is insolvent. In the last two years the trust fund has needed an infusion of \$35 billion from general revenues.

Ms. Broeker testified that based on the financial information the department currently has, MoDOT will NOT be able to match federal funds after 2018. Beginning in 2019, MoDOT will need additional state funding resources totaling at least \$230 million to match all anticipated federal funds. And that's funding just to keep MoDOT at current funding levels.

Because of declining revenues, MoDOT is receiving \$20 million less than four years ago. One of the reasons for this reduction in revenues is due to cars that get increased fuel mileage and people are driving less. By the year 2025, federal requirements must be met by new automobile manufacturers that the average gas mileage for new automobiles must be at least 49 miles per

gallon. This could mean less gasoline purchased resulting in less fuel tax receipts being collected for transportation purposes.

MoDOT has been talking about diminishing revenue streams since 2006. Revenues derived from Amendment 3 and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (federal stimulus package) has bought the department a small reprieve. What was once a construction program of \$1.2 billion has now fallen to less than \$700 million a year program and dropping. This is barely enough to maintain the state's existing system, much less tackle the projects that create jobs, increase safety, ease congestion and foster economic development.

Ms. Broeker testified that MoDOT and the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission have implemented several programs to put every dollar saved on the road. These programs include: Practical Design, Practical Operations, and the Bolder Five-Year Direction. However, MoDOT cannot cut its way to an improved transportation system for Missouri. Missourians need to make some hard choices and need to decide what kind of transportation system they want ... and how they will pay for it.

Don Wichern, MoDOT's Northwest District Engineer, provided the committee with an overview of the makeup of the district along with a list of some of the larger transportation needs in the area.

Mr. Wichern stated:

- Missouri has 33,000 miles of roads. This is more than the total number of state routes in Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa combined
- 200 bridges in the district are in poor condition
- 15 percent of the total amount of state roads can be found in Northwest Missouri
- 83 percent of the major routes in the district are in good condition
- 64 percent of the minor route pavements in the district are in good condition

According to Mr. Wichern, the minor (farm to market) routes are a concern because of the substructure from which the road is built it is hard to obtain a solid base which has resulted in rutting and lane edge cracking of the roads due to heavy equipment.

Funding for the Northwest district (much like all other MoDOT districts) has decreased for roads, bridges and safety projects. For example, in 2007 the district received \$70.71 million a year. For years 2012 to 2016, only \$50.09 million a year is projected because of the continued decrease in transportation funding.

Unfunded regional needs include:

- Interchange improvements at I-29/Hwy. 169 and widen Rt. 169 from I-29 to Rt. AC
 - o Estimated cost - \$20 million to \$25 million
- Interchange improvement at I-35 and Hwy. 36 in Cameron
 - o Estimated cost - \$10 million to \$15 million

- Improvement pavements with shoulders and rumble stripes
 - o Estimated cost - \$30 million to \$35 million

- Interchange improvement at Rt. 36 and Route AC
 - o Estimated cost - \$10 million to \$15 million

Randy Railsback, Green Hills Regional Planning Commission, testified that his association has had a great working relationship with MoDOT for the last 22 years because everyone works well together as part of the regional Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) to identify regional needs.

Mr. Railsback said he understands there are common needs in all regions of the state and there needs to be a common “statewide” message for safety and corridor improvements. Otherwise there will always be competing factors for funding, such as should there be funding for Rt. 65 or should the funds go to Hwy. 13.

Mr. Railsback said his commission supports the Blue Ribbon Committee’s efforts and supports (Speaker Tilley’s) leadership to find a funding solution.

Steve Maxey, North Central Missouri College, stated his appreciation that the Blue Ribbon Committee recognizes the need to work together for a funding solution. Mr. Maxey provided an example of when regions work together to address local needs, then funding becomes readily available (referring to a one of the college’s needs to work with a local hospital and local municipality to build a local project).

Mr. Maxey deeply appreciates working with MoDOT.

Tye Parsons, Northwest Missouri Regional Council of Governments, testified that the local Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) continues to hear three reoccurring themes:

- The importance of minor routes and the impact these roads have on rural Missouri. Safety is the most important (especially when moving large pieces of farm equipment along the roadway).
- Good accessibility to minor routes.
- Any new additional transportation funding should be placed on roads and bridges – not transit, bike paths or walking trails.

Mr. Parson said that he fully understands that something needs to be done (in terms of identifying additional funding for transportation) and there is a lack of courage to push a revenue increase. “Quit kicking the can down the roads.”

Brad McAnally, Hy-Vee, stated good roads means alot in terms of transporting goods. He said while his company does not support the tolling of I-70, they do support increasing the state gasoline tax because everyone pays.

Jody Carlson, City of Joseph, said the city appreciates MoDOT’s support on the southeast side of the city for the improvements on Riverside to Rt. AC/Belt highway for the right turn lanes. Mr.

Carlson said the city continues to look for ways to reduce congestion, provide safety and increase economic development. Improvements for sidewalks and transit are needed in order to tie all modes of transportation together. The city hopes that one day passenger rail service between Kansas City and Omaha, Nebraska becomes a reality.

Ted Allison, St. Joseph Metro Chamber of Commerce, testified that Hwy. 36 and Riverside overpass is a hindrance to the local area. There are approximately 10,000 employees that come through this interchange a day and improvements are badly needed. He also stated there is a need for improvements at the Rt. 169 and I-29 intersection.

Mr. Allison said while money is short, thought must be given to prioritizing economic development projects as a way to revitalize some regions to help interject funding back into the economy. While the chamber does not have a position on how to address the need for increase funding for transportation, Mr. Allison stated that as an Oklahoman the turnpike (tolling) he believes is the best way to “pay as you go” for building new roads.

Mark Gough, City of Cameron, said the intersection at Rt. 36 and I-35 need safety improvements. While the city spends much of its own money for local lighting improvements in the area additional state funds are needed. Mr. Gough said if citizens see the need for an increase in funding, they will come forward and support the proposed funding source (as has been the case when the city passed a one-half cent sales tax increase for local purposes).

Mr. Mark Gargas, Prudential Snook Realtors, said he would like to see additional bike trails to be built along the hospital in Cameron; specifically, McElwaine Road and Rt. 36 and Griffin Road. Mr. Gargas said intersection at Rt. 36 and I-35 is needed to improve safety for approximately 30,000 cars a day that travel through the area.

Terry McClatchey, AG Processing, said the company supports separating the Burlington Rail track from the Hwy. 59 with an overpass for emergency situations. Mr. McClatchey, said he supports a revenue package that includes either a sales tax increase or possibly a fuel tax increase. Mr. McClatshey said don't be afraid to ask businesses to step forward and help for transportation investments.

Bob Burnett, Mo-Kan Regional Council, provided the committee with a handout that outlined transportation need within the Mo-Kan Region. The list included:

- Increase Rt. 169 to four-lanes between St. Joseph and Smithville
- Eliminate at-grade intersections on Rt. 36
- Reconstruct I-35 interchange as Rt. 36 in Cameron to alleviate congestion on Rt. 36 and Bob Griffin Road
- Focus more resources on lettered routes
- Reconstruct interchange at I-29 and Rt. 169 in St. Joseph to alleviate congestion on Rt. 169
- Rt. 36 interchange in Buchanan County to support the planned Agri-Business Expo Center

At the request of chairman McKenna, Roberta Broeker was asked to explain to the audience how much a one-cent fuel tax generates. Roberta responded by stating a one-cent fuel tax generates about \$40 million a year with 70 percent of the revenues going to MoDOT and the remaining 30 percent to the counties and cities.

Roberta also explained that a one-cent general sales tax generates between \$650 million to \$700 million a year.

Dirck Clark, Heartland Regional Medical Center, stated improvements at Riverside Road and Hwy. 36 are needed to better serve patients during emergency situations.

Anne Pearce, Missouri Western State University, testified that she was aware there are many transportation needs with limited funding. Congestion on the eastside of St. Joseph along I-29 is a real concern. Ms. Pearce said that I-29 runs right down the middle of the campus and that a person cannot travel from one side of the campus to another without crossing the interstate. Ms. Pearce said that the university may be interested in donating some property to help alleviate congestion – generated from university events – if an interchange can be erected off I-29 and Faron Road.

Dan Hegeman, Kansas City Power & Light, testified that the company is very pleased with MoDOT's responsiveness during emergency situation (such as snow removal). Mr. Hegeman said that the maintenance of rural roads is very important to KCP&L in order for servicemen to provide utility service to its customers.

Terry Rumery, City of Chillicothe, said the city has land ready for development; however funding is needed to connect the property to a serviceable route. Mr. Rumery referred to the "entrepreneurial spirit" when 4-laning Rt. 36 across the state and that you must consider all funding sources when considering increasing revenues for transportation. Mr. Rumery stated that he believes the legislature needs a backbone to move forward with some sort of funding package. He concluded his remarks by saying it is hard to raise the fuel tax when revenues go down and fuel mileage for automobiles continues to go up.

Amy Supple, Chillicothe Chamber of Commerce, testified that she is very appreciative of MoDOT's help on past projects (referring to MoDOT Area Engineer Tonya Lohman). Ms. Supple said that with the district's help she was able to produce an audio tour on what you can do with limited funding when promoting your local regions. A compact disc was distributed to all the committee members. Ms. Supple said we all need to work together to make the "pie" bigger and that tolling can be used to help with larger projects along with public private partnerships.

Chief Mike Dalsing, St. Joseph Fire Department, thanked MoDOT staff for their help during emergency situations. Chief Dalsing said that he really likes the guard cables along I-29, not only because the cables are made in St. Joseph, but moreso the cables provide safety from cross-over accidents.

Rich Hanson, Show Me Ethanol, wanted to share with the committee how appreciative he was that MoDOT helped improve accessibility in and out of the ethanol plant and the road resurfacing project along Rt. 65 and Rt. 24.

Tom Richmond, Altec, thanked MoDOT for all its good work. Mr. Richmond said he appreciated the safety improvements along Hwy. 71, Riverside Road and the completion of Rt. 36. Mr. Richmond said there is “no one size fits all” referring to supporting a revenue package for transportation. He suggested that the committee look at several different funding packages to generate the needed amount of funds for transportation purposes.

Jackie Spainhower, St. Joseph Safety & Health Council, provided a listing of suggested transportation safety improvement projects:

- Pavement improvements
- Shoulders on minor routes
- Multimodal funding is needed for other modes of transportation (bike paths, walking trails)
- The passage of a primary safety belt
- Full ban on electronic devices when operating a motor vehicle
- Keep Missouri’s motorcycle helmet law in tact

While Ms. Spainhower didn’t suggest a specific funding source for transportation, she did recommend that a state sales tax would be the best option for additional revenues.

Steve Bratt, Kawasaki, testified that he is very appreciative of the improvements along Rt. 71 and the installation of guard cables along I-29. Mr. Bratt suggested that a tax on casinos, an increase in the alcohol tax and/or the vehicle registration fees could provide options for increased funding. He also suggested a tire tax increase and fuel tax increase are all viable options. Mr. Bratt stated he believes minor routes are important to maintain. Mr. Bratt said the state needs to look at expanding other forms of transportation such as high speed rail.

Testimony from Brad Lau, St. Joseph Regional Port Authority, was read by Mr. Allison, St. Joseph Metro Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Lau’s written remarks focused on the need to ship as much cargo as possible on barges. This would reduce the number of commercial trucks operating on Missouri’s highways.

Mr. Glenn Jonagan, City of Maryville, stated that four-laning Rt. 71 could be a great economic boon for the city. Where there are no four-lane highways, it is hard to develop rural areas. Specifically, improvement to Rt. 136 and I-35 could have a positive impact to northern Missouri. Mr. Jonagan suggested that a sales tax increase, a registration fee increase or fuel tax increase be considered as ways to generate additional funding for transportation.

Nate Walker, candidate for the 3rd House District, testified that a sales tax be considered as a viable funding source for transportation. Mr. Walker said that in order to pass a revenue package all political parties must get engaged with the dialogue – all the way from House and Senate leadership to the executive branch. Mr. Walker said that local communities must be supportive of any funding efforts.

Jim Gansford, St. Joseph Bike Club, testified that safety and economic development must be included in a funding package. When making improvements to the minor routes, pedestrians and bicycles must be taken into consideration. Local citizens appreciate all of MoDOT's efforts.

Bill Bernier, Chairman of the 36 Corridor Coalition, said people support an improved transportation system. Mr. Bernier said when selling a funding package, that one of the messages must include that MoDOT does a good job. When considering a funding package, Mr. Bernier told the committee to look at more than one funding source.

Missouri Highways and Transportation Commissioner, Steve Miller, ended the hearing by thanking all the persons who attended the hearing and thanked Speaker Tilley for setting up the Blue Ribbon Committee.

The next meeting for the Blue Ribbon Citizens Committee is scheduled for June 1, at the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce office building, at 1:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned.