



BRPC BRIEF

a publication of Boonslick Regional Planning Commission

May 2011

MoDOT 's Bolder 5-Year Direction

On Wednesday, May 4, 2011 the Missouri Highway and Transportation Commission unveiled a plan to drastically reduce MoDOT's operating costs. The plan, when fully implemented, will enable MoDOT to invest an additional \$500 million in highways and bridges over the next 5 years.

To achieve this level of cost savings the plan will "right-size" the department's staff, facilities, and equipment. The proposed plan cost reductions include the following elements:

- Reducing the number of MoDOT districts from 10 to 7. (Propose closing of Macon, Willow Springs and Joplin district offices).
- Reducing the number of staff by 1,200 (Nearly a 20% reduction in the workforce)
- Reducing facilities by 135.
- Reducing equipment by 740 pieces.

Change is never easy. The proposed reduction in the number of MoDOT districts means the areas served by each district will also change. A map of the proposed new district boundaries is attached. Lincoln and Warren counties are proposed to be part of the St. Louis district; while Montgomery County is proposed to be part of the Central District in Jefferson City. (Currently the entire Boonslick Region is in Northeast District) In addition, the highway shed in Montgomery City is proposed to close. All other facilities in the region are proposed to remain open.

So what does this all mean to the Boonslick Region and how will it impact our transportation planning process? The transportation planning process and planning framework in the State of Missouri is very open and transparent. As a planning partner we can "plug into" the process wherever we are aligned. Our input will not change. Obviously, we enjoy a great relationship with the leadership and staff at the Hannibal office, and we will miss that. However, we will be able to establish these same relationships with any district we are part of. We have good relationships with the St. Louis District because of common corridors and the commuting patterns. The leadership and staff at the St. Louis are familiar with our region. The Central District will be a new relationship that we need to develop, but we will embrace that when this plan is put into action.

As a region we will discuss the proposed changes and offer suggestions and comments that we can develop consensus on. We can discuss if we want to keep our entire region in the same district and offer comments related thereto. Regardless of the district alignment, our TAC structure will not change—we will continue to provide transportation planning services to the Boonslick Region and will forward these recommendations to the appropriate district.

Funding for transportation is obviously a point of concern for many of our local leaders. Under the proposed changes, our ability to compete for transportation projects will principally remain unchanged. Missouri allocates 50% of its transportation funding to the urban areas and 50% to rural areas. Our region will continue to compete for projects under the rural funding allocation, even if part of the region is included in the St. Louis District. The likely manifestation of this proposal is that the St. Louis District will have a Transportation Improvement Program for urban areas, and one for rural areas. Presently, District 4 in Kansas City currently operates under this arrangement.

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I view this primarily as an internal MoDOT management issue and decision. Until additional transportation revenue can be generated the Department must do everything in its power to conserve operational resources and direct those resources to what the public needs—and that is a safe and reliable transportation system.

The plan is open for public comment for the next 30 days and will be taken up for consideration by the Missouri Highway and Transportation Commission at its June meeting. The entire plan and map is available online at www.modot.gov or on our website at www.boonslick.org.

I welcome any thoughts and comments related to this proposal. Our TAC will discuss the plan at its next meeting scheduled for Thursday, May 12, 2011. Furthermore, I will present any thoughts you have to the BRPC Executive Committee to determine what comments we wish to make as a region.

Personally, I see this as a bold move by MoDOT to reduce operating costs, elevate investment in roads and bridges, respond to the citizen's concern for less government, and ultimately gain voter confidence in the Department so additional revenues for transportation will be supported. While this is not an easy adjustment to make, it is necessary because the financial resources are not sufficient. MoDOT has roughly half the funding resources it has had for the past 5 years; therefore, it will take less staff, facilities, and equipment to oversee the transportation improvement program.

I would encourage you to visit our website— www.boonslick.org and provide your opinion in our online poll. (located on the lower right hand side of the home page.)

If you have any specific questions or would like any additional information, please contact the office at (636)456-3473. As a reminder, you can keep track of any new information on our website. Visit www.boonslick.org for the latest information.

Thanks,
Steve