



NEWS RELEASE

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INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITY FOR COUNTY EXECUTIVE EHLMANN; CALLS FOR MODOT TO LEAD THE WAY

ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MO – One thing St. Charles County Executive Steve Ehlmann and President-Elect Donald Trump see eye-to-eye on is that infrastructure is a priority. Across the United States, for Trump; across St. Charles County, for Ehlmann.

The county's I-70 corridor is the economic engine of St. Charles County, Ehlmann says. Data shows 48 percent of sales tax, 46 percent of jobs and 27 percent of residents are within one mile of I-70 in St. Charles County.

"The nation's interstate system started in St. Charles County in 1956," says Ehlmann. "It was not designed for the development that has occurred in the last 60 years. The time is now to plan for the future of the I-70 corridor."

But leaders at the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) announced 18 months ago the intent to devote its annual construction budget entirely for maintenance and rehabilitation of existing and primary roads – not enhancing existing roads or constructing new ones. Long before that decision was made, MoDOT had embarked on a study of the Interstate 270 corridor, and more recently, had begun a study of the Interstate 70 corridor in MoDOT's St. Louis District. But both studies were shut down, Ehlmann says, to reinforce the fact that no funds were available for highway improvements.

Ehlmann disagreed with the decision to halt the studies, and renewed his call for the I-70 study in a recent letter to MoDOT Director Patrick McKenna. In it, he cites two examples for continuing to plan for future funding.

"When Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), commonly referred to as 'The Stimulus Bill,' only two projects in the St. Louis Region were able to fully utilize ARRA funds – the Highway 141 Extension in St. Louis County and Phase II of the Page Avenue Extension in St. Charles County," Ehlmann said in the letter. "MoDOT had told local leaders in both counties for years that there was no funding to complete these projects.

"Nevertheless," Ehlmann wrote further, "officials from both jurisdictions continued, sometimes at their own expense, to get these projects through planning, environmental review and design stages. As a result, they were 'shovel-ready' when a combined \$100 million-plus in federal dollars became available."

Ehlmann is urging McKenna and MoDOT to follow that lead with the I-70 corridor. He wants to be "shovel-ready" when funding becomes available.

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“The dollars might be coming,” Ehlmann says. “President-Elect Trump has said infrastructure should be a priority in the first 100 days of his administration, and there seems to be bi-partisan support in Congress to bring our 20th Century infrastructure up to 21st Century standards.”

“These project initiatives need to be placed on hyper-accelerated schedules,” Ehlmann told McKenna in the letter. “Those within the Department (MoDOT) who drag their feet should be held responsible if the region is not prepared to spend the funds that could be coming from Washington in the next year.”

Interstate 70 is one of the most important transportation corridors in the greater St. Louis region. Planning for the future will not leave Missourians with false expectations that funding is available, but might excite them to know what is in the future when the dollars *are* there.

“We need to get shovel-ready now,” Ehlmann says. “If this region is to attain the powerhouse status of past years, we must move immediately and more aggressively. MoDOT officials need to lead the way.”

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