



# NEWS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Colene McEntee, Public Affairs Coordinator, (636) 949-1864, cell (314) 707-4004, [cmcentee@sccmo.org](mailto:cmcentee@sccmo.org)

### **EAST-WEST GATEWAY APPROVES TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PLAN, PROJECTS FOR ST. CHARLES COUNTY**

Projects include safety improvements to Route N and 94, I-70 corridor study

**ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MO** - The East-West Gateway Council of Governments voted to approve the 2014-2017 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) today, which included a number of projects supported by East-West Gateway board member and St. Charles County Executive Steve Ehlmann to improve the commutes and safety of residents on roadways. These projects are also a part of the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT)'s 2014-2018 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, adopted on July 9.

"I would like to thank the members of the East-West Gateway board, MoDOT, as well as the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission and outgoing chair Grace Nichols for their support," said Ehlmann. "St. Charles County residents are going to be extremely pleased to see what these projects will do for our community."

Projects in the plan include:

- **Missouri Route N** – Funding to provide solutions for safety issues along Route N, specifically from Route Z to Sommers Road and Route T to Route Z, to make it a more forgiving highway. Improvements include resurfacing pavement, adding shoulders, and edgeline and centerline striping. Estimated cost is \$7,542,000.

Crissy Holmes with Shoulders for Safety (SOS) – Phase II, a group of citizens advocating for shoulders along this stretch of road, is happy to see these projects come to fruition. Two years ago, she formed SOS - Phase II after her daughter came of driving age and upon learning about the high number of accidents on the highway. "This road is a two-lane country road, very well-travelled with five schools along it, and there's one accident after another," said Holmes. "County Executive Ehlmann heard our case, this project was made a priority and MoDOT and the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission really gave it the attention it deserves. We are beyond thrilled that it's going to happen and that it's going to happen so quickly. It was a community effort."

- **Missouri Route 94** – Funding to provide safety improvements from Route 47 to Route D, including pavement resurfacing, adding shoulders, and work to make curves less sharp more forgiving. Estimated cost is \$9,229,000. Funding of \$1,555,000 was also approved for shoulder additions and grade improvements along Route 94 near Terry Road to prevent flooding.
- **I-70/Mid Rivers Mall Drive Interchange Payback** – Reimbursement of \$3,334,000 to St. Charles County Government for funds advanced to MoDOT to accelerate construction of the diverging diamond interchange at I-70 and Mid Rivers Mall Drive. This project is critical to alleviate congestion in the area, especially during

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evening rush hour for westbound motorists. The interchange is set to open in Nov.2013 before Thanksgiving and the holiday shopping season; if county government had not advanced the funding, the interchange would not have been constructed until 2015. The County was able to advance the funds to MoDOT thanks to the ½ cent Transportation Sales Tax reauthorized by voters in Aug. 2012.

“This is a perfect example of how voter support for the Transportation Sales Tax helped make progress happen,” said Ehlmann. “Commuters are sure to notice a tremendous difference in traffic in the area once this project is complete.”

- **Environmental Impact Statement/I-70 Corridor Study** – Funding for a review of the traffic operations along I-70 from Wentzville to St. Louis to determine whether the interstate is meeting the needs of freight and commuter travel in the region. The study will also involve looking at regional level concepts to address any problems and shortfalls discovered during the review. Estimated cost of the study is \$1,500,000.

Economically, I-70 is a critical infrastructure for transportation throughout the region, but there has not been a set strategic plan or direction for improving the interstate. “Looking at the statistics, 50% of sales tax revenue is derived and 48% of jobs are within one mile of I-70 in St. Charles County, which is huge,” said John Greifzu, Director of Transportation for St. Charles County. “However, it was designed in the 1950’s and there have only been spot improvements. There has never been a comprehensive review or plan, so it’s time.”

“This study is a necessity for St. Charles County to get better utilization along the corridor,” said Ehlmann. “Looking at the land, 5% is vacant and 25% is undeveloped. These vacant, undeveloped and underutilized properties provide an opportunity for redevelopment and new development should the road infrastructure support the land use and mitigate congestion.”

Along with these new projects on the horizon, St. Charles County residents can look forward to other huge construction projects slated to open over the next few years:

- The westbound I-70 Blanchette Bridge will be operational in August 2013.
- Phase 3 of the Page Extension/Route 364 is under construction and set to be complete in November 2014.
- The new Daniel Boone Bridge will be completed at the end of 2015.

“MoDOT is instrumental in making these plans a reality, and we are looking forward to working with them as these big projects are completed and in starting new projects in the TIP,” said Ehlmann.

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