



May 4, 2007

The GR Capitol Report

Governmental Relations 573/522-9284

RETIREMENT BILL RECEIVES FINAL PASSAGE: On May 3, the Senate Truly Agreed to and Finally Passed HCS SB 127, sponsored by Sen. Robert Mayer (R-Dexter). The bill makes changes to the Missouri Department of Transportation and Highway Patrol Employees' Retirement System (MPERS) by extending the option to MoDOT and patrol employees the purchase of four years of prior public creditable service for retirement purposes. The bill also adds one additional "highway patrol retiree" to the retirement board. The bill now goes to the Governor for his consideration to be signed into law.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY PASSES BILL TO EXPAND COMMERCIAL ZONES IN MISSOURI: On May 2, HCS SB 322, sponsored by Sen. Kevin Engler (R-Farmington) and handled in the House by Rep. Nathan Cooper (R-Cape Girardeau), was Truly Agreed to and Finally Passed. This bill expands the commercial zones in the St. Louis, Kansas City and St. Joseph areas. In St. Louis, the commercial zone is extended to include the entire St. Charles County and portions of Jefferson and St. Genevieve Counties. The Kansas City commercial zone is extended to Excelsior Springs on Hwy. 210. The commercial zones are extended to allow trucks to carry heavier loads to reduce the number of trips made. In St. Joseph, the commercial zone has been "tweaked" to allow weights permitted just across the state line in Kansas to accommodate the hauling of livestock. Throughout the session, MoDOT staff has cautioned elected officials about expanding commercial zones in the state because of the condition of many state roads and deficient bridges. Interstates are exempt from this provision of this bill. The bill now goes to the Governor for his consideration to be signed into law.

MHTC'S VOIDING OUTDOOR ADVERTISING PERMIT PROPOSAL RECEIVES APPROVAL IN COMMITTEE HEARING: On May 1, SB 130, sponsored by Sen. Bill Stouffer (R-Napton), was heard by the House Local Government Committee. This proposal allows the Missouri Highways and Transportation Committee the authority to void outdoor advertising permits under certain circumstances. Testifying in support of SB 130 was MoDOT's Outdoor Advertising Permit Specialist, Jessica Sawyer. Rand Richardson, Federal Highway Administration also attended the hearing.

Others testifying in support was Bob Wilson, Missouri Outdoor Advertising Association.

There was no opposition to the bill.

On May 2, the committee approved the bill. The bill now goes to the House floor for debate.

BRIDGE AND HIGHWAY DESIGNATIONS RECEIVE FINAL PASSAGE: On May 2, the House concurred with a few Senate changes and approved HB 56, sponsored by Rep. David Sater (R-Cassville). This bill includes several bridge and highway designations as follows:

- a portion of Highway 112 from the intersection of Highway 76 south to the intersection of Highway AA to be designated as the “Deputy Christopher Lee Castetter Memorial Highway” ;
- a portion of State Route M between Old Lemay Ferry Road and Moss Hollow Road as the “Officer Stephen Strehl Memorial Highway”;
- a portion of U.S. Highway 61/67 between Wolf Hollow Road and State Route M as the “1922 Sulphur Springs Rail Disaster Memorial Highway”;
- a portion of Highway 110 from U.S. Highway 21 as the “DeSoto Railroad Employees Memorial Highway”;
- a portion of Interstate 44 from St. Louis City to the intersection of Kingshighway as the “Officer Michael Barwick Memorial Highway”;
- a new Paseo River Bridge carrying Interstate 29/35 over the Missouri River as the “Christopher S. Bond Bridge”;
- a portion of State Route 7 in Lee’s Summit as the “Larry Stewart Secret Santa Memorial Highway” and
- a portion of Missouri Route 74/34 within Cape Girardeau County as the "John Oliver Jr. Parkway".

The bill now goes to the Governor for his consideration to be signed into law.

IN A SURPRISE MOVE, THE SENATE PASSES PRIMARY SAFETY BELT

LEGISLATION: On May 1, the Senate brought up HB 744, sponsored by Rep. Neal St. Onge (R-Ballwin) and handled by Sen. Bill Stouffer (R-Napton). HB 744 began as a federal mandate proposal that contained two of MoDOT’s priorities: voiding outdoor advertising permits and the unified carrier registration system. Sen. Stouffer introduced a floor substitute, which converted this bill into a large omnibus transportation proposal, that got even larger as eighteen different amendments were offered, of which, fifteen passed during the debate. Some of the issues now included in this proposal are:

- Primary enforcement of Missouri’s safety belt law (supported by MoDOT);
- Modified motor vehicle inspections program, now required for vehicles with more than 100,000 miles, or upon sale or trade of the vehicle;
- Voiding outdoor advertising permits (supported by MoDOT);
- Allows for annual bid bonds to be submitted on MoDOT projects (supported by MoDOT);

- Clarifies the state’s design build statutes as it relates to surety bonds;
- Allows for a contractor sales tax exemption for MoDOT construction projects;
- Implementation of a new drunk driving memorial sign program;
- Modifies the permissible length for saddlemount commercial motor vehicles;
- Modifies the weight allowed on commercial motor vehicles equipped with idle reduction technology;
- Requires commercial motor carrier inspectors to receive POST training;
- Booster seat exemption for buses; and
- Unified Carrier Registration (supported by MoDOT).

Efforts were made, but failed to repeal the state’s motorcycle helmet law during the debate on HB 744.

The Senate is expected to pass the omnibus transportation bill next week. The bill will then go to conference where the House and Senate will work together to work out their differences.

HOUSE BILL IN JEOPARDY: SS/SCS/HCS/HB 327, sponsored by Rep. Ron Richard (R-Joplin) and handled by Sen. John Greisheimer (R-Washington), is a “job creation” bill that may not pass through the legislative process this year because it contains many controversial issues. The reason for the controversy surrounds the issue of tax credits and exemptions and the impact those tax breaks could have on the financial coffers of the state. This “jobs bill” has several issues in it that affect transportation. Some of the proposals that could negatively impact MoDOT include:

- A state tax credit for new motor vehicles designed to operate on E-85 fuel.
- Jet fuel tax exemption for transoceanic flights. This could impact the state’s aviation trust fund by about \$400,000 a year.
- Fuel tax exemption for school buses. This could impact the road fund of about \$1.8 million a year.
- Fuel tax exemption for transit providers. This tax exemption could impact the road fund of about \$1.2 million a year.

The House adopted the conference committee report. The Senate has not adopted the conference committee report and has requested another conference. Last session the economic development bill met a similar ending.

SENATE PROPOSAL AMENDED IN HOUSE COMMITTEE TO INCLUDE MODOT

PRIORITIES: On May 1, during an executive session of the House Transportation Committee, SB 45, sponsored by Sen. Rob Mayer (R-Dexter), was amended to include two of MoDOT's legislative priorities. SB 45 is a proposal that will modify the law for household goods movers, making it a little easier for these motor carriers to adjust their rates. SB 45 now includes MoDOT's provisions for voiding outdoor advertising permits and a unified carrier registration system. This proposal now goes to the full House for further debate and consideration.

LEGISLATIVE MATRIX: Attached is Governmental Relations weekly update matrix, which shows some of the more important transportation bills that the department is tracking. If you should have any questions about these or any other pending legislative proposals, contact GR at 573.522.9284.

UPCOMING TRANSPORTATION EVENTS:

- May 18 – Last day of the 2007 legislative session