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LAWMAKERS BEGIN FILING BILLS: State lawmakers have begun pre-filing legislation for the 2004 legislative session, including several transportation related bills. Since pre-filing began Dec. 1, senators have filed 219 bills and 11 joint resolutions and representatives have filed 55 bills and five joint resolutions.

Transportation bills filed include:

- House Joint Resolution 31, sponsored by Rep. Jeff Harris, D-Columbia, which proposes a change in the Missouri constitution to allow the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission to use state funds to build, operate and maintain toll roads and bridges. Missouri voters would have to approve the constitutional change;
- Senate Joint Resolution 31, sponsored by Sen. John Loudon, R-Ballwin, which also proposes a change to the Missouri constitution to allow the MHTC to construct, operate and maintain toll roads;
- Senate Bill 855, sponsored by Loudon, which would revise Missouri statutes to allow the MHTC to build and operate toll roads. (Changes are required in both the constitution and the statutes in order to implement toll roads in Missouri);
- House Bill 803, sponsored by Rep. Scott Lipke, R-Jackson, which would require MoDOT to consider the value of restricted or lost highway access in assessing damages in eminent domain cases;
- Senate Joint Resolution 34, sponsored by Sen. Matt Bartle, R-Lee's Summit, which would abolish the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission and replace it with a secretary of transportation who would be appointed by the governor;
- House Bill 870, sponsored by Bartle, which would prohibit sexually-oriented billboards from being located within one mile of a state highway;
- House Bill 770, sponsored by Rep. Dan Ward, D-Bonne Terre, which would allow people 21 years of age or older to ride a motorcycle without a helmet; and
- Senate Bill 891, sponsored by Sen. Mary Bland, D-Kansas City, which would require MoDOT to study traffic congestion problems in Kansas City.

The 2004 legislative session begins Jan. 7.

MoDOT LEADERSHIP MEETS WITH LEGISLATORS: MoDOT Director Henry Hungerbeeler, Chief Engineer Kevin Keith, Chief Operating Officer Pat Goff and Director of

Communications Rich Hood met with members of the Missouri House of Representatives and Senate on Dec. 1 to discuss a number of transportation issues.

Members from the House and Senate Transportation, Budget, and Appropriations committees were invited to meet with the MoDOT officials at the General Headquarters building. Staff from the Governor's Office, House and Senate Appropriations offices and the Office of Administration – Budget and Planning also were invited.

The meeting was a continuation of the director's road tour, which began in November, to visit with taxpayers throughout the state to discuss their transportation concerns. The purpose of this meeting was to focus on Missouri's elected officials and their staff to discuss their specific statewide transportation concerns.

Following Hungerbeeler's opening remarks, several legislators made comments and asked questions about a variety of issues including:

- How does MoDOT handle excess property issues?
- How much should the fuel tax be raised so that the department can issue more bonds for road and bridge construction?
- Explain what the department means by rebuilding I-70.
- Are Transportation Development Districts increasing in numbers throughout Missouri?
- What is the department's reasoning for closing maintenance sheds?

Department officials provided answers to the legislator's questions.

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE HEARS MoDOT BUDGET TESTIMONY:

MoDOT Director Henry Hungerbeeler, Chief Financial Officer Pat Goff, Resource Management Director Herbert Wheeler, and Resource Management Coordinator Jay Moore testified before the House Appropriations—Transportation and Economic Development Committee on Dec. 2 to provide details and answers to questions about MoDOT's budget requests for fiscal year 2005.

The committee will make recommendations regarding MoDOT's budget to the House Budget Committee to consider during next year's legislative session.

MoDOT's budget for multimodal programs as well as personal service (employee salaries), fringe benefits, and expenses and equipment must go through the legislative appropriation process each year. Highway construction and maintenance funds are not appropriated by the General Assembly.

MoDOT's budget request for funds appropriated by the General Assembly for fiscal year 2005 is \$1,676,161,009. The department's fiscal year 2004 appropriations totaled \$1,750,613,615.