

August 2005 - Paving the Way to Kansas' Future

Paving the Way to Kansas' Future

By Congressman Jerry Moran

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Laid out in one path, the total distance of public roads and highways in Kansas would reach more than halfway to the moon. It's hard to believe, but with more than 134,500 miles of public roads and highways in our state, Kansas ranks fourth in the nation in the total number of highway miles. The new highway bill recently signed into law goes a long way towards improving those highways. This legislation will lead to better highways, increased job opportunities, and a boon in the Kansas economy for years to come.

Under this legislation, Kansas' average yearly share of federal highway dollars will jump from \$321 million per year to a record \$383 million per year. This significant increase in highway funding will not only lead to better highways, roads and bridges, but will also mean great things to the state in terms of jobs and economic development. A study by the United States Department of Transportation estimates that every \$1 billion invested in federal transportation infrastructure creates 47,500 jobs. Thus, this legislation will create and sustain thousands of jobs in Kansas, benefiting every community. This includes not only construction jobs, but drivers that transport our manufactured goods and agriculture commodities around the world in a cost-effective, efficient way. Investing in our infrastructure and a reliable transportation network is essential for Kansas products to compete in a global marketplace.

Also included in this legislation is record high funding for highway and transit projects to meet the economic and safety needs throughout Kansas. They include improvements to U.S. Highways 54 and 50 in southwest Kansas, I-70 in north central Kansas, planning to reconstruct one of the most dangerous intersections in the state at Kellogg and I-235 in Wichita, and the expansion of roadways in Johnson County and Topeka, to name just a few.

In addition, there is a significant investment in improving transportation infrastructure in and around our military installations. The first of thousands of new troops, civilian employees, and their families have already started arriving at Fort Riley, and the numbers will continue to grow as the Big Red One finally returns home. The return of these soldiers will require the reconstruction of nearly every major road in the area. The new highway bill provides \$44 million for the Fort Riley area. These funds were secured through our joint efforts, along with those of Senator Sam Brownback and Congressman Jim Ryun. Congressmen Todd Tiahrt and Dennis Moore also played an important role in crafting this legislation for Kansas.

Kansas highways, roads and bridges link our producers and travelers to the rest of the world. Whether it's driving to school or hauling grain, Kansans rely upon the safety and efficiency of the state's transportation system. We are proud of our efforts in this legislation, and we will work with Kansas transportation officials to ensure that these dollars are spent where they are intended, in order to pave the way to a great future for Kansas.