



Report shows big improvement in Missouri roads

State's rank in overall performance jumped 11 spots in one year

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Missouri's rank in overall performance of its state highway system jumped 11 spots in one year, from 28th in 2004 to 17th in 2005, according to figures released Thursday by the Reason Foundation--the second-largest increase in the nation, trailing only Nevada.

For the five-year period from 2000 to 2005, Missouri's jump was even more dramatic--from 39th to 17th in overall performance. Missouri was second only to New Mexico in the largest five-year improvement.

The non-profit research and education organization cited Missouri's major improvements in road conditions statewide. Missouri also had the third lowest administrative costs per mile and the sixth lowest project expenses per mile--key measures of efficient operations and management.

"This report is testimony to the rapid work we've done to make our roads smoother and safer and to our efforts to keep costs low and complete projects on time and within budget," said Pete Rahn, director of the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT).

In 2005, MoDOT was only partially finished with its Smooth Roads Initiative, so Missouri's ranking would likely be even higher if 2006 data were used, Rahn said.

MoDOT's Smooth Roads Initiative, which improved 2,200 miles of the state's busiest highways, brought 74% of Missouri's major highways up to good condition, an increase from 47% in 2004. MoDOT completed the initiative in December 2006, a year ahead of schedule.

The state's lowest score came on deficient bridges, which MoDOT plans to address with its Safe & Sound Bridge Improvement Program. Under that initiative, 800 of the state's worst bridges will be repaired or replaced by 2012.

The report also showed Missouri had the sixth lowest revenue per mile of any state, while having the seventh largest highway system, with 32,464 miles.

"So, while holding down and focusing expenditures, Missouri faces continuing challenges, but is moving in the right direction," the report concluded.

Also on Thursday, a national transportation research group, TRIP, said Missouri had improved road and bridge conditions, enhanced highway safety and eased congestion with additional funding from Amendment 3. In addition, a recent survey of truckers nationwide showed I-70 and I-44 in Missouri among the nation's most improved highways.

Despite this progress, both the Reason Foundation and TRIP reports warned about future transportation challenges. According to TRIP, MoDOT's annual construction program will sharply fall from \$1.23 billion in 2008 to \$569 million in 2010. The state faces a transportation funding shortfall of \$18 billion over the next 20 years.

The Reason Foundation report can be found online at <http://reason.org/ps360/>. The TRIP report is on the Web at www.tripnet.org.

Source: *Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT)*
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