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Emerson Concerned About MoDOT Budget Plan

MAY 11TH 2011 BY NEWS

Emerson Concerned About MoDOT Budget Plan

*By Annabeth Miller,
ShowMe Times Editor*

U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson is not a fan of the recent decision by the Missouri Department of Transportation to cut its budget, reduce its staff and consolidate offices.

The plan by MoDOT calls for reducing the size of the department by 1,200 employees and closing 135 facilities – including the district headquarters at Willow Springs in southern Missouri. MoDOT Director Kevin Keith made the announcement of the budget-cutting plan late last week, saying the department was facing a severe decline in funding and inability to match federal funds.

"We are facing a transportation funding crisis in Missouri," MoDOT Director Kevin Keith said. "Over the past year, we have worked hard to reduce the size of our workforce and cut costs, but it isn't enough. We must take further action to become the right size to serve our customers given the severe reduction in funding for transportation."

But Emerson says she is concerned that residents in rural southern Missouri will be shortchanged.

"I'm highly concerned about any plan to reduce the attention given to our rural state roads and highways, and I am dead set against the proposal on the table to do just that with

MoDoT. Eliminating MoDoT District 9 means other regions must absorb nearly 10,000 square miles of our state containing 3,744 road miles,” Emerson said Wednesday morning.

Emerson said that between Sikeston and Springfield, Jefferson City to the Arkansas state line would all be under the jurisdiction of one office. MoDOT’s District 9 already covers an area that is larger than nine U.S. states.

“I think it is irresponsible to look the other way on our state’s rural transportation priorities, and it is foolish to expect MoDoT to have good information about roads located some 200 miles from the nearest office,” she commented.

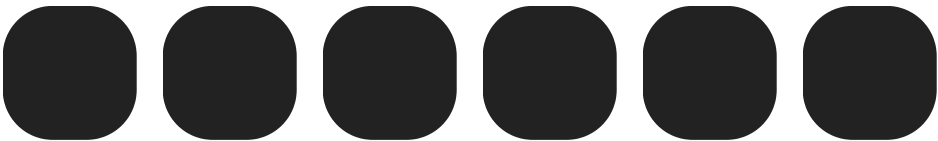
For the past five years, Missouri's state highway construction program has averaged \$1.2 billion a year. MoDOT presented a new, five-year construction program last week that is only half that amount - about \$600 million a year.

“In Southern Missouri, we rely on our transportation infrastructure to travel significant distances every day to school, to work and on errands. We also require our roads and bridges to safely carry the commerce of our region, to connect tourism with our beautiful natural resources and recreational opportunities, and to provide speedy transit for law enforcement and first responders. When it comes to maintaining and improving this infrastructure, the job is never done. It is important for me and for the Missourians who use these roads every day that as many eyes as possible are on the transportation priorities of our region,” Emerson said.

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Churches Join Hands To Help Flood Victims

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Churches Join Hands To Help Flood Victims

By Annabeth Miller
ShowMe Times Editor

A drive in most any direction from Dexter today, and the devastation left the recent spring floods come into clear focus. Homes damaged and destroyed; families displaced and lives that have devastated.

Now area churches are beginning to break down walls and fences, join hands and be "God's gloves and boots" to mend lives and offer hope.

For at least the third time in less than a week, area pastors have gathered together and heard the message of working together as one body to help people in Southeast Missouri. On Tuesday they gathered around tables at the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Dexter to break bread and form a plan of action.

The initial focus of their combined efforts will be Morehouse – a community where more than half of the homes have been destroyed or damaged by flooding waters.

“We’ve been working in Morehouse to give those people some hope, because they’ve lost everything,” said Pastor Tim Russell. As of Tuesday morning, there have been 273 out of 400 homes in Morehouse that have suffered damage or were destroyed by floods, he reported.

But Russell said there needs to be a broad approach, because families have been uprooted

throughout Southeast Missouri and are in need of a helping hand. Communities like Kinder, Puxico, Caruthersville, New Madrid, East Prairie, Marston and more will need to recover and recuperate from the floodwaters.

Russell and a corps of pastors are trying to mobilize churches to help neighbors.

“I really feel like it’s time and very important to come together as one to try and make a difference,” Russell said.

The approach is holistic – not just helping families in moving back into homes or relocating, but helping with food, clothing, furniture – all the things that are necessary to help get started on solid footing. To do this, they say, will take a cooperative effort.

The work this last weekend was just the beginning. Russell and Rev. Mike Kohlbaker described how crews went into Morehouse starting Friday, May 6, and began work – starting at the First General Baptist Church. Crews – including teens from First Assembly of God – returned to Morehouse on Saturday. By Sunday morning the church had been cleaned of mud, sheet rock pulled, wet carpet removed, and air conditioners running.

“We brought the volunteers to that church,” Russell said. And on Sunday morning, the community had worship where there had been more than 16 inches of water and mud.

“We’re in this for the long haul,” he said. “That means with food, shelter, clothing, sheet rock, plywood – to put these people back together.” Our priority is to get them dry so that they have something they can go back to, so these towns don’t become ghost towns. I believe it’s a time of opportunity - that people all across the region can come together as one to make a huge difference.”

Russell and the other pastors are encouraging churches to join in the effort to help put Southeast Missouri back together. Pastors and church groups that would like to get involved are invited to call 573.624.2500 to become involved.

“Our priority is to get them dry so that they have something they can go back to - that that they can have hope,” Russell said. “I believe it’s a time of opportunity that people all across the region can come together as one to make a huge difference.”

For additional information or to volunteer, contact Project Hope at 573.624.2500.

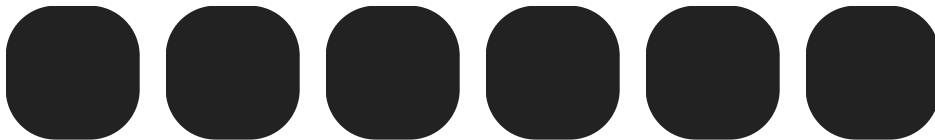
Photo Above: Tim Russell discusses the efforts of area churches to join together to help

victims of area floods. A dozen pastors and church representatives gathered for a lunch at First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to discuss the work ahead.

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Five Counties Declared Major Disaster

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Five Counties Declared Major Disaster

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. - President Barack Obama has ordered federal aid for Missouri to help the recovery from this spring's severe storms, tornadoes and flooding.

. Obama on Monday declared a major disaster in Missouri. The declaration allows federal funding for individuals in just five counties - Butler, Mississippi, New Madrid, St. Louis and Taney. The federal assistance includes grants for temporary housing, home repairs and loans for uninsured property losses. Federal funding also can be used by some government agencies and nonprofit groups for emergency work and repairs or

replacements to damaged facilities.

Gov. Jay Nixon said more counties in the state may be designated as disaster areas as additional damage assessments are completed.

“I appreciate the President taking swift action on the request that I made just four days ago, so that Missouri families can more quickly recover from the severe storms, tornadoes, and record flooding that have affected parts of our state,” Nixon said. “As the flood waters recede and more damage assessments can be done, we will ask the federal government to expand this disaster declaration to provide similar vital assistance to other impacted communities and families.”

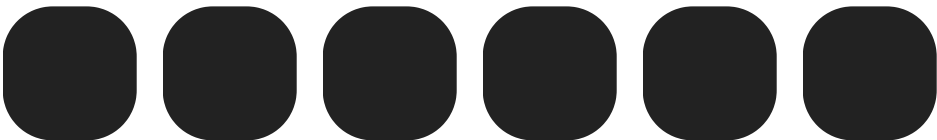
Gov. Nixon declared a state of emergency in Missouri on April 22. That order activated the State Emergency Operations Center and enabled the state to mobilize its resources - including the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), the National Guard and Highway Patrol - to assist local authorities.

Since that time, almost 800 members of the National Guard have been mobilized to provide assistance where needed; 150 Highway Patrol troopers were assigned to help with the flooding response in southern and southeast Missouri.

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Nixon Asks USDA To Begin Assessment ASAP

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Nixon Asks USDA To Begin Assessment ASAP

Gov. Jay Nixon announced Monday that he has asked the USDA's Farm Service Agency to start damage assessments "as soon as possible" for 56 Missouri counties hit by this spring's severe storms and flooding.

The request is the first step in declaring the counties as primary disaster areas -- those where at least 30 percent of the estimated yield of a crop will be lost or where individual farmers suffer production losses of more than 30 percent. A disaster declaration would allow eligible Missouri farmers to be considered for USDA assistance.

Nixon's request includes Stoddard County and the following other counties in the ShowMe State: Barry, Barton, Bollinger, Butler, Camden, Cape Girardeau, Carter, Cedar, Christian, Crawford, Dade, Dallas, Dent, Douglas, Dunklin, Franklin, Gasconade, Greene, Hickory, Howell, Iron, Jasper, Jefferson, Laclede, Lawrence, Madison, Maries, McDonald, Miller, Mississippi, New Madrid, Newton, Oregon, Osage, Ozark, Pemiscot, Perry, Phelps, Polk, Pulaski, Reynolds, Ripley, St. Francois, Ste. Genevieve, St. Louis, Scott, Shannon, Stone, Taney, Texas, Vernon, Washington, Wayne, Webster and Wright.

Late last week Nixon asked the federal government to declare a disaster in several counties affected by flooding, including Stoddard County and much of Southeast Missouri. A federal disaster declaration would allow individuals and governments to get federal funds to help with flood cleanup.

Photo Above: Gov. Jay Nixon exits a Blackhawk helicopter while on a tour of flooded areas in southeast Missouri. Behind him is Maj. Gen. Stephen L. Danner, commanding general of the Missouri National Guard. (Governor's Office Photo)

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SEMO Instructor Discusses Post-Flood Soil

MAY 09TH 2011 BY NEWS

SEMO Instructor Discusses Post-Flood Soil

CAPE GIRARDEAU, Mo, - A professor and area agriculture expert at Southeast Missouri State University has delivered a lecture concerning the possible damage to the land in the Birds Point New Madrid Floodway.

Dr. Michael Aide, chair of the Department of Agriculture at Southeast Missouri State University, presented a special lecture on soil damage likely to occur to farms and agriculture in the Missouri Bootheel as a result of the breaching of the New Madrid spillway. The lecture was presented in an AO215 “Soils” class.

Aide presented the lecture at the request of students and transmitted via interactive television to Southeast’s regional campuses.

The 45-minute lecture is now available online from Southeast. Those interested in this recorded video may connect from any PC From any PC with a high speed connection. A spokesman for the University says the link should open Windows Media Player and play the video.

http://wmserver.cstl.semo.edu/itv/AO215_Aide_830_TR_SP11-027.wmv

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