

The **Association** report

from the **Capitol**

February 11, 2016

Putting together a financial package for MoDOT – with a reasonable increase to meet growing needs – has been a legislative priority for several years.

Most legislators are aware that more funding is essential though quite a number are reluctant to make a progressive vote to address the issue. Legislators, particularly in rural parts of the state are starting to deal with bridge closures or severe weight limitations. In these instances the safety issues and the accompanying travel inconveniences are painfully felt.

Several solutions have been examined; a fuel tax increase proposed last year (SB540 passed the senate but was not taken up by the house,) toll roads have some support but picked up heavy opposition (trucking industry, for example,) and this legislative season Doug Libla, a senator from Poplar Bluff, has moved SB623 to a position ready for debate. It would raise the gas tax by a penny and a half a gallon and diesel by three and a half. But, we're told, it won't move further because of a threatened filibuster.

Most recently a plan for using general revenue tax dollars to fix bridges is being discussed. Some influential legislators say the extra dollars will come from welfare cuts, specifically by removing poor children from public assistance. Will this move forward? And would it create controversy and possibly unanticipated consequences in the future? The remainder of the legislative session likely will offer some interesting debate. I'll keep an eye on it and report to you as it progresses.

**From Harry Hill, Lobbyist
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