



June 5, 2026

Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission
P.O. Box 270,
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102

Subject: **Support for continued and increased investments in projects that specifically meet the needs of vulnerable road users [VRU] in Missouri for the Draft 2027-2031 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program [STIP]**

Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission,

Introduction

Missourians for Responsible Transportation [MRT] is writing to the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission [MHTC] to express our strong support for continued and increased investments in projects that specifically meet the needs of vulnerable road users [VRU] in Missouri for the Draft 2027-2031 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program [STIP].

MRT is a statewide partnership led by four transportation advocacy organizations (BikeWalkKC in Kansas City, Local Motion in Columbia, Ozark Greenways in Springfield, and Trailnet in St. Louis) that is raising the voices of Missourians to state legislators and policymakers. Founded in 2018, MRT serves as an umbrella partnership that brings together communities and grassroots organizations from urban and rural areas to advocate with one voice at the state level for a fiscally responsible, safe, and equitable transportation system. MRT represents 35,000 members across Missouri.

The Ongoing Need for VRU-Focused Projects

When MRT submitted comments regarding the STIP in June of last year, a key figure we highlighted was that Missouri faced its highest-ever recorded pedestrian fatalities in 2024. This tragic milestone occurred even as overall roadway fatalities decreased. We said then that we were concerned that without greater accommodations for Vulnerable Road Users (VRUs), the number of VRU fatalities would continue to climb. **While data is still preliminary, it is possible that [Missouri in 2025 faced a record-high rate of VRU fatalities](#) when accounting for pedestrians and bicyclists combined.**

Note: We confirmed with the Highway Safety Office—we did not find aggregate descriptions of this data on MoDOT or MSHP blogs, newsletters, or data dissemination distributed online.

According to data shared in the new 2026 MoDOT Long-Range Transportation Plan [LRTP], overall traffic fatalities are decreasing, which we celebrate. However, that is not the case for VRU, suggesting that mechanisms that improve roadway safety for drivers is not working for those outside of a vehicle. As noted in the LRTP, from 2020-2024, in Missouri there was a:

- 17% increase in motorcycle fatalities
- 11 % increase in pedestrian fatalities
- 125% increase in bicycle fatalities

These aren't just numbers on a page; they are our friends, neighbors, coworkers, and fellow Missourians. To address these trends, we urge the Missouri Department of Transportation to adhere to its own 2026 LRTP goals to build a system that is Safe ("Enhance Safety for All Users of the Transportation Network") and Connected ("Maximize Mobility and Connect Communities Through Multimodal Transportation Options"). However, the STIP directs funds that in many cases will expand highways, which may also pose greater potential risks to safety for VRU (according to [Smart Growth America's report *Dangerous by Design 2024*](#)).

Interstate/System Expansion Concerns

As with last year, not one project is labeled as a 'road diet' or 'roadway reconfiguration,' despite their recognition as a Federal Highway Administration Proven Safety Countermeasure and widespread successful documentation with their applications in Missouri (such as the MO-115 road diet, recognized in the 2025 *Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment* as a "VRU Success Story" [p.46]). And as with last year, many projects included in the Draft STIP are focused on expanding our state's transportation system, while far fewer comprise projects that incorporate active transportation facilities.

While individual expansion projects may have merit for economic development and are identified locally as needs, they present a financial challenge **as a composite: the sheer amount of new capacity improvement/expansion projects each year will increase our state's financial obligations over time through increased maintenance costs**. This is despite our new 2026 LRTP Stewardship Goal: "Preserve the Assets and Services Currently in Place" (or more colloquially described as 'Maintain what we have first before adding to the system').

Two days ago as of this writing, the MO Highways and Transportation Commission approved a \$471 million highway expansion project, with one of the project goals to "Construct a durable transportation facility that is compatible with freight movement and future expansion." **With the money available for transportation, and the power to direct it, MoDOT with our public dollars has the opportunity to truly build a transportation system that works for all Missourians' travel demands**—especially in an increasingly unstable fuel environment.

However, as things stand:

- For Missouri's passenger rail (with an annual economic output at \$478.9 million) and public transit (offering 40 million rides to Missourians annually), proving their relevance is an annual battle.
- For active transportation, the communities themselves need to find the funding to build sidewalks, crosswalks, and trails on state-owned roads to address safety issues exacerbated by the high-speed roads designs.
- And for highway expansions: We have billions and billions of dollars to spend.

Need for Statewide Active Transportation Planning for Project Implementation

To help guide a shift towards a safer and more fiscally responsible transportation funding and implementation approach, **we urge MoDOT to support statewide active transportation planning**. Missouri remains one of only a few remaining states without structures in place for state-level active transportation planning, with responsibilities left to the MoDOT Districts, regional planning commissions, and ultimately local governments—where the highest safety challenges often are found in communities with limited resources. We believe a clearer planning process and more emphasis from MoDOT leadership’s leadership and government relations teams can guide the appropriate allocation of resources to reduce the pedestrian fatality rate in our state, all while ensuring our system is economically resilient for MoDOT and its users for decades to come.

As part of this request, through the 2026 LRTP update public comment period, [we conducted research and gathered support from over 100 organizations](#) across the state and beyond urging MoDOT to take this critical step. Our advocacy outlined specific measures to continue MoDOT’s efforts to bolster VRU safety, and we are encouraged that some recommended policy measures are being considered for implementation as part of the LRTP.

Conclusion

Overall, we are grateful for all MoDOT is doing to address safety issues for vulnerable road users across its vast system. We understand that this is a monumental challenge, and we are appreciative of the projects that include safety interventions. However, we also need to be clear that highway expansion projects will continue to exacerbate the very safety issues for vulnerable road users that we are seeking to address. Please keep this in mind as the STIP is developed for the coming year.

Sincerely,

Jackson Hotaling

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jackson Hotaling', with a stylized, cursive script.

Director of Policy and Programs, Missourians for Responsible Transportation