

**Pete K. Rahn**  
Director  
Missouri Department of Transportation

As director of the Missouri Department of Transportation, Pete Rahn oversees the work of more than 6,000 employees who plan, build and maintain the state's transportation system. This includes 32,000 miles of highways and the state support of aviation, rail, transit, and port systems. Rahn assumed his position in September 2004.

At the national level, he is vice-president of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, as well as a member of its board of directors and chairman of its Standing Committee on Highway Traffic Safety. He also serves on the executive committee of the Transportation Research Board, as well as its Task Force on Accelerating Innovation in the Highway Industry.

From 1995-2002 he held the post of Cabinet Secretary, New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department.

Rahn graduated from New Mexico State University with a bachelor of arts in government and a bachelor of science in planning.

Rahn was raised in New Mexico. He and his wife, Sue, have 2 children. His free time is spent enjoying family and outdoor activities.

## **AASHTO Vice President Pete Rahn**

### **National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission**

**Chicago**

**Wednesday/Thursday, April 18-19, 2007**

I'm Pete Rahn, Director of the Missouri Department of Transportation and Vice-President the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to share five key messages:

- We are at a standstill in our efforts to reduce deaths on our highways and we must commit ourselves to a goal of reducing those fatalities by 10,000 per decade.
- We must regain public confidence in our federal-aid program by making our transportation investments in core programs, based on plans made at the state and local level – not in Washington.
- The Interstate System, on which we have built our global economy, must be rebuilt, improved and expanded to serve our needs today and tomorrow.
- We must maintain our current transportation system – all 4 million miles of it – to meet the needs of a nation on the move. We are all aware, that the nation's existing transportation system is aging.
- To overcome the political challenge of adjusting federal fuel taxes, Congress should create a Transportation Revenue Advisory Commission to recommend rate changes, which would then take effect unless rejected.

## Safety First

How can we achieve the goal of reducing 40,000 plus fatalities by some 10,000 a decade?

First, federal leadership will be key. It is vital that we sustain the funding for the important safety policy development and research of the Federal Highway Administration, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

But to succeed we have to capture national attention and stimulate political action by legislators at the state and national level. We urge you to call for the creation of a Presidential Commission to focus national attention on this issue and to help develop a national strategic highway safety plan to drive down this tragic death toll.

States have had great success with the comprehensive strategic highway safety plans and we urge you to continue this requirement. By bringing all the relevant parties to the table, law enforcement, emergency services, state and local transportation officials, we can ensure that we bring every resource to bear on making our highways safer. In February, state DOT safety experts met with their counterparts in other agencies at a national forum, funded through the National Cooperative Highway Research Program, to share best practices in comprehensive highway safety plans. This kind of peer exchange is another step in achieving our goal of saving lives and reducing injuries on our highways.

Local and state law-enforcement agencies also are critical in reducing fatalities. Their enforcement in work zones and against speeding, red light running and aggressive driving is key. And they play a major role in helping us compile useful, valid crash data. Equally important is the role of the courts. But in many courts, traffic penalties are often reduced, which can minimize deterrence.

AASHTO urges you to establish an interagency coordinating committee to recommend model statutes and best practices to Congress, and the states, for increased education, more effective state and local laws, and rigorous enforcement and adjudication. We suggest that the U.S. Department of Justice should lead this committee, and that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration all play a role in it.

But basic highway investment also saves lives. Missouri experienced a thirteen percent reduction in fatalities in 2006, largely due to enhancements such as rumble stripes, improved signage and 3-strand median guard cable. Our thirteen percent reduction was the third largest in the country. It's a statistic we are proud of, and which we hope to improve upon as we take the next step by implementing such improvements throughout our highway system.

This year our legislature is considering enactment of a primary safety belt law. The bill is House Bill 90 – that bill number was chosen because we believe we can save approximately 90 lives each year in our state by improving safety belt usage. A primary safety belt law will significantly strengthen the role law enforcement can play in highway safety.

### Build Public Confidence through Core Programs

Enactment of the last highway and transit legislation should have been good news for America. But even though that law increased federal funding by 40 percent, the news media was flooded with the image of a “bridge to nowhere” that became the icon of Congressional earmarking. If you Google that phrase, you will find more than 1.3 million references. A similar search for SAFETEA-LU yields 300,000 references. I think that’s a pretty fair indication of the image problem now facing federal transportation funding.

We need to regain public confidence in the federal-aid program, particularly if we are going to ask that they provide the funding needed to meet the nation’s transportation needs. The public has to be confident that they are getting value for their tax dollars. We can restore that confidence if we return to the concept of apportioning federal aid to the states through the core programs. That allows state and local governments that are closest to the public to advance transportation projects chosen in an open and systematic way.

Since 1991, earmarking of projects has increased ten-fold to more than 6,000 projects in the last bill. The public is demanding that we be accountable for wise investments. That will only happen when we increase the proportion of federal funding that is distributed through the core programs in a fair and systematic way. It’s time to get back to basics – public confidence in our transportation financing system demands it.

### The Interstate System – Phase Two

The U.S. Interstate Highway System transformed this nation into a world economic power, changing the way we live, work and travel. Its 47,000 miles represent only 1 percent of total U.S. road mileage, but it carries 24 percent of all traffic. But it was designed and built for the last century, and for this century we must modernize the system we have in place and double its capacity.

Our population, the number of drivers and vehicles, the miles traveled, the number of trucks – all these factors have and will continue to grow dramatically. Over the past 50 years, while highway travel has increased from 600 billion vehicle miles traveled to three trillion, our Interstate mileage has increased only 15 percent. Whatever extra capacity there was is depleted.

## A Strategy for a 21st Century Interstate System

AASHTO members believe the Interstate Highway System for the 21st century can be brought about through four strategic actions:

- preserve the current system, so it lasts for at least the next 50 years;
- enhance its performance through advanced ITS technologies and system management to reduce congestion and improve reliability;
- expand capacity to meet future needs; and
- reduce growth in highway demand by expanding the capacity of transit and rail.

To remain competitive in the global economy and meet America's 21st century mobility needs, we will need to add nearly as much capacity to the Interstate System in Phase II, as we did over the last 50 years in Phase I.

Our preliminary studies show there is a need to add as many as 10,000 miles of new routes on new corridors, 20,000 miles of upgrades to National Highway System routes to Interstate standards, and 20,000 new lane miles on existing Interstate routes. These could include exclusive truck lanes and value-priced lanes. System improvement would also include correcting bottlenecks, upgrading interchanges, and improving intermodal connections.

## Maintain the Nation's Existing Transportation System

Preservation of the system we already have on the Interstates and our other public roads is essential. The nation's Interstate System is over 50 years old and many of the nation's bridges are much older. The Interstate System is only 47,000 miles of a road network totaling about 4 million miles. Those roadways -- including the 162,000-mile National Highway System and 810,000 miles of other federally eligible highways -- see extensive use as well, and will continue too through several more generations. Our roadway system is showing the consequences of substantial use.

Capital investment for Interstate system preservation totaled \$9.1 billion in 2002. What level of investment will we need to accomplish such work in the future? U.S. DOT's *Conditions and Performance Report* estimated a "cost to improve" annual "constant dollar" investment for the next 20 years of \$6.4 billion for rural and \$24.9 billion for urban Interstates. If stated in "year of expenditure" dollars, the numbers would be even higher.

As this reconstruction work goes forward, DOTs will have to minimize disruption to the traveling public. Work-zone delays are estimated to cause 24 percent of non-recurring congestion. As the infrastructure ages and more rehabilitation is

needed, we are going to have to find better techniques to get the job done. These may include using components prefabricated off-site, longer-lasting materials, working at night, short-term shutdowns to allow intensive work, and incentives to get contractors to finish their work faster.

State-by-state, in-depth analysis will be needed. AASHTO urges that the Commission call for two comprehensive Interstate Highway System studies conducted jointly by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the state DOTs. The first should study the costs of rebuilding or replacing the 55,000 bridges on the system, the 15,000 interchanges, and the pavement foundations for the system's 210,000 lane miles. The second should study long-term, system wide expansion needs of the network, taking into account the global economy, population and economic growth, safety and national defense and homeland security needs.

We must maintain our current transportation system. It is time we, as a nation, move forward with a commitment to investment in needed improvements to the existing transportation system.

#### Transportation Revenue Advisory Commission

How are we going to pay for this?

There is a wide array of funding options to be tapped to provide needed transportation investments. That is the subject of AASHTO's third report to the Commission "*Revenue Sources to Fund the Needs of the U.S. Transportation System*," which is being provided to you today.

But the fact remains that there has not been an increase in the federal fuel tax since 1993. That in itself demonstrates the political difficulty of increasing transportation revenue at the national level, whatever the mechanism. To resolve this problem, we believe that the Congress should put in place the same mechanism it has used to address the political challenge of military base closings. We recommend Congress create an impartial Transportation Revenue Advisory Commission to periodically review rates of fuel taxes and other fees and make recommendations on adjustments. After a review period, those recommendations would take effect, unless Congress voted to reject them.

Thank you for the opportunity you have given state transportation officials to share their ideas and recommendations as you embark on this historic initiative to shape the future of transportation.

I'd be happy to answer your questions.