



# CONSTRUCTOR

The Voice of the Kansas City Construction Industry

FALL 2010

A Word From the President

## The Value of a Strong Association

This has been an exciting year for me to serve as president of the Heavy Constructors Association of Greater Kansas City. Serving you has given me great insight into the real and important work that the Heavies do. It has also made me realize the tremendous value our association holds for our members.



Gavin Barnby  
HCA President

Largely due to the tireless efforts of the Heavies' staff, the Kansas Legislature last spring passed an \$8.2 billion transportation plan that will create and support tens of thousands of jobs. Known as the Transportation Works for Kansas (T-Works) Program, this 10-year plan will enable Kansas to move forward with critically needed transportation improvements as we continue to fight our way out of the Great Recession.

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## kcICON Project Helping Bridge the Employment Gap

During these times of widespread construction unemployment, the kcICON/Christopher S. Bond Bridge project has provided a much-needed dose of work.

The iconic, \$245 million project has employed more than 450 people at a time during peak construction periods, including this summer.

"We've got more than a million man hours on this job so far," said Laura Wagner, public information officer for kcICON. "We're grateful to be able to employ as many people as we have on the kcICON project, and we hope to be able to employ more people on future projects when the funding is available."

### Safety, Convenience Far and Wide

The project will replace the Paseo Bridge and reconstruct/rehabilitate about four miles of Interstate 29/35 just north of Armour Road. It will create Missouri's widest bridge-deck concrete pour – a whopping 134 feet – and will greatly improve safety and convenience for the traveling public.

The work is being done by Paseo Corridor Constructors, a joint venture partnership of Clarkson Construction Co., Massman Construction Co. (both HCAGKC members) and Kiewit Construction. All three have extensive bridge construction experience under their belts.



The new Christopher S. Bond Bridge over the Missouri River was dedicated and opened to limited traffic in late September – six months ahead of schedule! HCA member Clarkson Construction has been instrumental in the \$245 million project. Photo by Cathy Morrison, MoDOT

"During these difficult economic times it's a great pleasure to give Paseo Corridor Constructors the opportunity to bring Kansas City an iconic bridge structure with many new safety improvements throughout the corridor, and be able to employ more than 450 local union

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Welcome to the Fall 2010 edition of *Constructor*. This newsletter comes to you as our industry continues to face significant economic challenges. Yet amid these challenges, we have had the good fortune to work on several great projects in the Kansas City area. Read about them inside ...



# MAKING IT BETTER

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# Chamber Points to KC's Woeful Lack of Infrastructure Maintenance

The Heavy Constructors Association of Greater Kansas City applauds the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce for laying it on the line in its updated Deferred Maintenance Report issued Aug. 4. The report highlights some of Kansas City's shortcomings in infrastructure funding, along with some solid recommendations on ways to turn the situation around.

The bottom line is that Kansas City has been doing a lousy job of maintaining our streets, roads, bridges, water systems and other infrastructure. This cannot be allowed to continue.

Naturally, our concerns for the issue come from the standpoint of creation and retention of family-wage jobs for our industry. But from a wider perspective, what's at stake here is keeping faith with taxpayers and the future economic viability of Kansas City. If our infrastructure stinks, then our economy will, too.



Kansas City has fallen years behind on basic infrastructure maintenance and improvements, creating a \$772 million backlog of critical needs.

## On the Same Page

Much of the report embodies the substance and spirit of positions that we Heavies have strongly advocated for a long time. Earlier this year we launched a candid "Stop the Nonsense" campaign to remind the City Council and Mayor Mark Funkhouser of their promises to improve the conditions and safety of Kansas City's critical infrastructure.

The Chamber report notes that significant changes have occurred at City Hall since January 2007, when the Chamber published its most previous Deferred Maintenance Report. For example, Kansas City voters in November 2007 approved a 10-year renewal of the 1-cent sales tax for capital improvements.

The renewal of the sales tax also changed the allocation of the sales tax funds. Fifteen percent of sales tax proceeds are earmarked for capital maintenance and 35 percent are earmarked for neighborhood improvements, with the remaining 50 percent for city-wide projects.

Interim City Manager Troy Schulte named Sherri McIntyre as assistant city manager to oversee Capital Improvements in April 2010, while the City Council enacted an ordinance in May 2010 that establishes a new Capital Projects Department that is to get in gear on May 1, 2011.

The report notes that long before the latest recession, Kansas City leaders had abandoned the Community Infrastructure Committee goal of an additional \$5 million increase annually for maintenance. Kansas City is reducing its annual expenditure for deferred maintenance from \$42 million in FY 09/10 to \$35 million in FY 10/11.

By Kansas City's own estimates, the entire capital backlog now exceeds \$772 million.

To put the \$772 million backlog figure into context, the Chamber report noted that Kansas City will add more than \$100 million annually to its backlog unless more

funds are utilized for deferred maintenance. Within three years, Kansas City would be faced with a \$1 billion backlog of capital maintenance projects. Yet in FY 2010/11, the City of Kansas City is only budgeting \$35 million for deferred maintenance.

## Backlogs Building

Citizens are fed up with this situation. A City Auditor's report released on June 1 showed that most residents are highly dissatisfied with the city's maintenance of streets, bridges and facilities. A preponderance of residents said infrastructure maintenance should be the city's top priority.

The Chamber report notes that Kansas City's estimated "ultimate build-out" of



A recent auditor's report showed that Kansas City residents are highly dissatisfied with the city's commitment to street, bridge and facility maintenance.

new capital projects along with the current \$772 million backlog totals more than \$3.9 billion dollars, and Kansas City has allocated on average only \$200,000 annually in street reconstruction projects (basic resurfacing projects not included), while the need for overdue reconstruction is \$14 million.

The city states in its own 2010 Infrastructure Report that "Street reconstruction is a capital program which has been almost completely unfunded within Kansas City, Missouri."

City Water Department officials say the total estimated infrastructure investment needs for water, sewer and stormwater utilities over the next 25 years is \$12 billion to \$15 billion over current spending levels.

Even when a capital project or deferred maintenance program is funded, it takes too long for the project to be bid, have the bid awarded, begin construction, finish the project and then pay the contractor for their services.

The report recommends that Kansas City fully fund capital maintenance, think strategically when investing in capital improvements, improve the Public Improvement Advisory Committee procedure and streamline the capital improvement process.

We at the HCAGKC appreciate the work and thought the Chamber put into this report. We hope our city leaders will listen and take heed. No matter what happens with economic conditions and City Hall politics, Kansas City must fully fund its infrastructure needs to lay the groundwork for good jobs and a good quality of life for taxpayers in the years to come. ■

# What a Difference a State Line Can Make!

By Edward R. DeSoignie, Executive Director

**W**e Kansans and Missourians love to play up our rivalries in areas such as football, basketball and which state has the best barbecue joints. And it's usually all in good fun. But this year we have seen a marked difference in the approaches of Kansas and Missouri toward transportation infrastructure funding, and it's a very serious matter.

In fact, it looks as if our road trips are going to get even bumpier when we cross from Kansas into Missouri.



Edward DeSoignie  
HCA Executive Director

## Forward Thinking Works

Last spring, after intensive lobbying by the Heavies and allied groups, the Kansas Legislature passed an \$8.2 billion package known as the Transportation Works for Kansas (T-Works) Program. The 10-year program includes funding for road and highway preservation, modernization, expansion and economic opportunity projects.

The significance of this Kansas legislation cannot be overstated. It was absolutely imperative that the state come up with a plan to replace the 10-year, \$13 billion program that expired last year. Failure to do so would have thrown Kansas back to the 1980s, when its roads were among the worst in the nation.

But across the state line, Missouri is falling behind in transportation improvements. The blame goes to political gridlock and unwillingness by Jefferson City politicians to talk about issues of substance.

## Good for How Long?

It was a mere six years ago that the Show-Me State passed Amendment 3 and committed significant funding to the state's highways. And I have to give Missouri credit for going to work fixing bridges around the state recently.

In early September the Reason Foundation's 19th annual Highway Report ranked Missouri No. 8 among states for its overall highway performance. Ed Hassinger, the St. Louis district engineer for the Missouri Department of Transportation, told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* that the study "shows you what an investment in transportation will do."

But the newspaper noted that transportation officials are concerned about Missouri highway funding drying up. "It's hard to convince people that they have to invest more in infrastructure when they see things are pretty good," said Bill McKenna, a former Missouri state senator and highway commissioner, and Chairman of the Missouri Transportation Alliance.

**"The new Transportation Plan will benefit every county in Kansas and further our ability to attract new companies to the state through a strong infrastructure system. This bill isn't just about the miles of road, rail or runway – it's about putting Kansans back to work."**

**– Tom Holland**

McKenna's words ring true with us Heavies. Maybe the only way we're going to obtain the transportation funding Missouri needs is through a voter referendum in 2012 or 2014. If that's what it takes, we will lead the charge.

## Support Sam?

Yet as pleased as we are with what Kansas has done, we know we can't let our guard down in the Sunflower State.

Sam Brownback, the frontrunner in the governor's race, does not have a strong record when it comes to supporting transportation infrastructure funding.

We prefer the outlook espoused by Brownback's Democratic opponent, Tom Holland. "The new Transportation Plan will benefit every county in Kansas and further our ability to attract new companies to the state through a strong infrastructure system," Holland said in a statement to our association. "This bill isn't just about the miles of road, rail or runway – it's about putting Kansans back to work."

A similar view was expressed to us by Holland's running mate, Kelly Kultala, who said "the legislation passed this year is a testament to what we can accomplish when we roll up our sleeves and work in a bipartisan manner to create jobs, strengthen our economy and move Kansas forward."

It is important to note that both Holland and Kultala voted for the sales tax and highway bills. But whether the race goes to Brownback or Holland, you can count on us Heavies doing everything we possibly can to make sure Kansas continues down the path of wise infrastructure investment. In today's fragile economy, no other investment is more important to our quality of life and that of our children.

They Said It Couldn't Be Done!

# Heavies Restore Critical I-470 Interchange in Record Time

**T**his past July, unprecedented groundwater buildup caused an embankment to slide alongside a key interchange of westbound I-470 in the Three Trails Crossing area. The slide left a 34-foot-wide gap in the busy highway. Commuters were gridlocked. The entire section of critical roadway needed to be examined and rebuilt – pronto!

The highway collapse and the ensuing traffic nightmare grabbed a lot of attention in the news media. The undermined section of road was part of a recent six-year, \$300 million project to untie the bedeviling transportation knot known as the “Grandview Triangle.” Heavies member company Pyramid Contractors was commended for getting the Triangle overhaul job done well, on time and on budget.

“Nobody could foresee, based on common engineering practice, that the slide would have occurred in this place,” Beth Wright, MoDOT’s Kansas City District Engineer, told *The Kansas City Star* in August.

But what many *did* foresee was the ability of the Heavies to roll up their sleeves and go into virtual attack mode to quickly repair the collapsed highway section. In late July, MoDOT chose Pyramid Contractors Inc. to build a 225-foot bridge extension to temporarily replace the collapsed section and get traffic flowing again from I-470 to I-435. The \$4.46 million emergency contract required the project to be completed by Sept. 15, and threatened penalties of \$40,000 a day for delays.



Commuters were given fast relief after groundwater problems caused a section of busy I-470 to collapse. Pyramid Contractors got traffic moving again in record time.

## Pyramid Stands Tall

Talk on the street was that Pyramid couldn’t possibly meet the September deadline. But the men and women of Pyramid’s team worked around the clock, pushing themselves to new limits to get this crucial job done on time and, indeed, managed to finish the job 19 days early!

As members have done so many times during our association’s 60-year history, Pyramid Contractors set upon this repair project with a strong sense of mission and *esprit de corps*. It wasn’t just the threat of financial penalties. Our members are motivated by pride and a desire to help our friends, neighbors and community get moving again, for the good of all.

Whenever our community is in a tough spot, the Heavies are there to make things better. Congratulations to the men and women of Pyramid Contractors! ■

## kcICON Project Helping Bridge the Employment Gap

(continued from page 1)

employees on this project,” said Bryan Wilkerson, project manager for Paseo Corridor Constructors and senior project manager with Clarkson Construction.

**“Other DOTs nationwide are looking at MoDOT’s program as an example for their on-the-job training programs. We have 16 graduates to date, and they’re very excited to be part of a historic project that, when finished, they can take their children across and tell them about the work they did on it.”**

### *An OJT Model for DOTs*

The project has gained a national reputation for the success of its on-the-job training, Wagner said. “Other DOTs nationwide are looking at MoDOT’s program as an example for their on-the-job training programs. We have 16 graduates to date, and they’re very excited to be part of a historic project that, when finished, they can take their children across and tell them about the work they did on it.”

Up to \$1.25 million of the project budget is geared toward workforce diversity. Dozens of minority, female and economically disadvantaged people are being trained.

The HCAGKC, as an active participant in the kcICON Workforce Utilization Roundtable, was proud to sign on to the kcICON Workforce Utilization Plan Partnering Agreement before construction got under way. ■

## The Value of a Strong Association

(continued from page 1)

Over in Missouri, the Heavies' staff played a crucial role in Kansas City's passage of a \$90 million bond issue package last June. These bonds, which have been accurately characterized as a local economic stimulus that will put people back to work, were approved by the voters in 2004 and 2005 but never actually sold.

**"I take tremendous pride in what our association has done to remove roadblocks from much needed transportation infrastructure work. But we have a lot more work in front of us."**

Of the \$90 million, \$33 million will fund the reconstruction of thoroughfares such as Troost, Wornall, Waukomis, North Brighton and 63rd Street.

I take tremendous pride in what our association has done to remove roadblocks from much needed transportation infrastructure work. But we have a lot more work in front of us.

For example, in a report issued last July, the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce stated that "Kansas City has averaged only \$200,000 annually in street reconstruction projects (cost for basic resurfacing projects not included), while the need for overdue reconstruction is \$14 million. Such a lack of investment in basic city service will have adverse effects for many years to come."

We have a lot of catching up to do. But we Heavies have never shied away from hard work, and we know that we are up to the tasks that lie ahead. Working together, we will make it better. ■

## Troost Bridge a Welcome Project for Our Community

*\$13 Million in Jobs and Rejuvenated Infrastructure Are in the Works*

**F**or too many years, Troost Avenue has embodied a figurative dividing line between diverse communities east and west. And for too many years, the Troost Bridge that spanned Brush Creek embodied Kansas City's worn-out infrastructure.

The bridge originally was built in 1917 and last received an upgrade in 1977. Thanks to a \$13 million project supported by \$9 million in federal stimulus funds, the Heavies are making it better on Troost. Kansas City will benefit from a safer, more reliable bridge, and from additional heavy construction jobs at a time when so many of our friends and neighbors are looking for work.

### Long Overdue

The primary construction contractor on the project is Pyramid Contractors. Mark Holmes, Pyramid's project manager at the site, discussed the progress under way when a visitor popped in on him in August.

"We're currently in Phase 1, Stage 1 of the contract, which includes getting the permanent utilities off the bridge and onto a temporary bridge so we can demolish the existing one and start construction," Holmes said. "We've also jumped on a few of the alternates that we received on the job, just to keep things rolling around here until these utilities get moved."

As with any bridge replacement job, the work comprises many segments that require careful coordination. "There's a lot involved with that," Holmes said. "We have to modify some existing walls down underneath the bridge. We've got a very large retaining wall that goes on the east side of Troost and the north side of Volker that's going to start within the next few weeks."

Holmes said Pyramid had hoped to finish the bridge project by this fall, but some delays have pushed the expected completion date out to early next spring. Holmes isn't complaining, though: "This is a very good job for us."

### Employment Stimulus

The Pyramid crew ran lean in August, but Holmes said work ramped up when bridge demolition began on Sept. 15. When it hits full strength, the project will probably employ around 30 or so workers on a typical day, including 15 or 20 from Pyramid, Holmes said. Lots of folks are looking forward to the project getting into full swing.

"I've got people stopping by every day looking for work," Holmes said. "I've never had this before. We've still got some of our guys sitting at home. That's how slow the times are right now. Once we get this going, we should be pretty much at full bore with our crews."

Much of the credit for the federal dollars garnered for the Troost Bridge replacement goes to Missouri Congressman Emanuel Cleaver. The rest of the money for the project is coming from the city's maintenance budget and from the citywide public improvement sales tax.

We Heavies hope the new bridge will help some heavy construction workers get back on their feet as it helps the heart of our city get back on track.



Heavy constructors are at work replacing the 93-year-old Troost Avenue Bridge over Brush Creek. Federal stimulus funds made the long-awaited project possible.



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## Meeting President a Special Honor for Heavy Equipment Operator

**P**hyllis Strozier, a roller operator for Superior Bowen Asphalt Co., appreciates federal stimulus dollars that have helped sustain the heavy construction industry and her livelihood.

So it was fitting last July when Strozier got to meet Barack Obama, the president who has championed stimulus funding that saved the jobs of so many heavy construction workers and other Americans.

The once-in-a-lifetime meeting occurred at a July 8 fundraising luncheon at the Kansas City Marriott Downtown for Democratic senate candidate Robin Carnahan. The president had flown into Kansas City for a day to drum up support for Carnahan, who subsequently won the Aug. 3 primary.

Strozier, who has worked in heavy construction for 23 years, attended the luncheon as a representative of the Heavies and as the guest of James B. Nutter Sr., founder of James B. Nutter & Co. Mortgage Lenders.

Strozier shook the president's hand and told him that Kansas City appreciates what he has done for our industry and those who depend on it for family-wage jobs.

"I told him we loved him in Kansas City and we love the job he's doing, because he provided stimulus money for highway construction," said Strozier, a mother of four and grandmother of two. "That has allowed me to keep working and help provide for my family."

The president thanked Strozier and told her he liked Kansas City, and that he was honored to be in our town.

Strozier, who also is active in Operating Engineers Local 101 and hopes to run for union office some day, disclosed that Barack Obama is "even more handsome in person than he is on TV" and "was just a very nice man."

"I hope there will be more stimulus money provided for heavy construction here in the Kansas City area," she added. "It's been a wonderful experience working with the Heavies, and I hope to keep working with them for years to come." ■



Phyllis Strozier

## Kansas City Mayoral Race: A Pivotal Decision

*Capital Improvements Backlog  
Now a Major Campaign Issue*

**O**ne of the biggest items on the local political agenda for the remainder of this year is the race for Kansas City mayor. While our association is not yet ready to make an endorsement, we all need to pay close attention to the candidates and where they stand on infrastructure issues such as road funding, relieving the deferred maintenance backlog and speeding up the process for getting projects under way.

Here are the candidates, in alphabetical order: **Mike Burke**, attorney; **Mark Funkhouser**, incumbent mayor; **Deb Hermann**, veteran city councilwoman; **Jonas Hughes**, veteran Missouri state legislator; **Sly James Jr.**, attorney; **Jim Rowland**, former councilman and current director of the Jackson County Sports Complex Authority; **Charles B. Wheeler**, former mayor and Missouri state senator. ■