

Save the world

An overwhelming 75.1 percent of voters told pollster Zogby International that their purchasing decisions are influenced by a desire to conserve energy or improve the environment.

Business Forum

"The employer-based health care system is dead. ... It makes (companies) unable to fairly compete when America is the only country who asks its employers to put the price of health care on the costs of its products."

ANDY STERN, PRESIDENT OF THE SERVICE EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION, IN THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

COMMENTARY

PLAN ROUTES CONGESTION ELSEWHERE

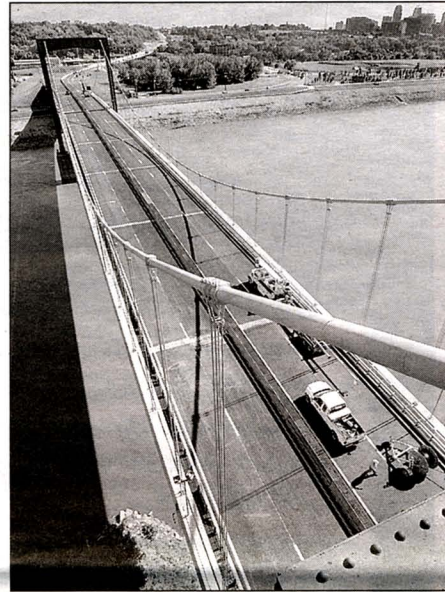
By KITE SINGLETON
Guest columnist

Just a darn minute, MoDOT.

In its Jan. 18 edition, *The Kansas City Star* praised the Missouri Department of Transportation for its progress on the Paseo Bridge. This new bridge will increase the capacity of Interstate 35 and Interstate 29 crossing the Missouri River from four lanes to six lanes.

Although *The Star* praised the project for "easing a significant choke point," it failed to recognize that in MoDOT's refusal to deal with the resulting congestion in the downtown freeway loop, it will simply move the "choke point" from the old bridge to the old loop.

The project would use \$245 million of our scarce transportation money to move the congestion a half-mile, to a point where accommodating it later will be impossible.



KEITH MYERS | THE KANSAS CITY STAR

Will Paseo Bridge work improve transportation or simply move congestion elsewhere?

With a 50 percent increase in the bridge's capacity, this new choke point will choke our old loop to death.

Most state transportation agencies, in contrast to

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TRAFFIC: Bridge plan shortsighted

FROM D8
MoDOT, have realized that added road capacity invites added vehicles in a growing crescendo of congestion. In response, most transportation experts and state agencies have turned to a variety of congestion-mitigating strategies such as high-occupancy vehicle lanes that encourage car pooling and public transit ridership.

Lane metering, toll roads, nonmotorized modes, redirecting through traffic to other routes, intelligent highway systems (such as the new electronic "scout" information signs now showing up on Kansas City freeways) are among other congestion-mitigating strategies being used across the nation. For the past seven years, advocates have pleaded with MoDOT to incorporate such strategies in the Paseo Bridge corridor, but to no avail. So what outcome should we expect from this myopic, old-engineering approach to the Paseo Bridge? Residents of nearby neighborhoods will be visited by the sounds, smells, dust and traffic of construction, pushing the roadway closer and closer to their homes.

And when the project is complete, the increase in vehicles will bring a level of noise and air pollution to reduce the

quality of life in their neighborhoods. But of wider interest, perhaps, will be the increased congestion in the downtown loop.

The downtown successes that Mayor Kay Barnes has led over the past eight years are demanding what every successful urban center demands — better ways to get there without having to worry about parking.

On Nov. 7, 2006, Kansas City voters recognized the folly of continuing to rely so exclusively on automobile transportation. Growing congestion, higher gas prices and the rising popularity of attractions in their urban center tipped the scale toward investing in light rail.

This decision has changed the dynamic of planning for transportation in the Kansas City region.

It is time for MoDOT to halt its rush into a hurry-up design-build process for this important Kansas City link, to reassess the span as a multimode transportation investment that will serve Kansas Citians north and south for the next 50 to 100 years.

Kite Singleton is a Kansas City architect and former chairman of the City Plan Commission.