

## **An overview of Arkansas Good Roads Transportation Council.....**

Arkansas Good Roads Transportation Council is a 501 c 3 non-for profit organization whose mission is: **“The Arkansas Good Roads Transportation Council gathers and disseminates information to educate the public on the importance and value of a modern and safe highway system, adequately financed through dedicated funding sources, to provide for the economic growth of the State and its citizens.”**

AGRTC’s leadership is acutely aware that Arkansas’ economy is strongly tied to the quality of Arkansas’ infrastructure. We are also aware that Arkansas’ infrastructure is growing increasingly old and obsolete, thus being an invitation to tragedy; this is also a problem that is putting Arkansas at a disadvantage in the ever more competitive nationwide and expanding global economy.

We are further convinced that we must have a strong transportation system that will help grow our economy and provide good jobs for our high school and college graduates, thereby keeping them in Arkansas. AGRTC devotes a major portion of our efforts working with legislators, both state and national, on funding sources for Arkansas Highways.

Our roots as an organization trace back to the late 1890’s and was first organized by concerned citizens, business leaders, and multiple organizations from across the state. Since then have met with success over the years, but ours is a never ending job.

Our state’s economy and lifestyle depends on being able to move people and goods conveniently and safely and on time every time. We are a small state, yet we have one of the highest numbers of miles in the nation incorporated into our State Highway System. Over 16,000 miles of highways and over 6,700 bridges are included in the Arkansas Highway System. Our roads not only need to be maintained but need upgrading to three, four or five lanes. The need covers our entire state.

In addition to being a non-profit organization, AGRTC is also a non-partisan, informational and educational organization who depends entirely on dues and contributions from members and trade associations to continue our efforts.

Membership consists of individuals, corporations, engineers, contractors, AGC, AAPA, Arkansas Municipal League, County Judges Association, chambers of commerce, persons and organizations from all across Arkansas. Additionally, each county has a workgroup established to further assist AGRTC in keeping up to date information about issues statewide.

I have been Executive Director since June, 2006. My experience includes two years as a county judge and six years (term limited) as an Arkansas State Representative. Since becoming Executive Director, I have traveled to over 100 cities and towns all across Arkansas speaking to various groups, civic organizations, chambers of commerce, etc., to create an awareness among Arkansans of the many benefits gained from better roads and bridges, including:

**Improved Safety:** by supporting roadway improvements that enhance safety to reduce the number of roadway accidents, thereby decreasing injuries and saving lives in the process.

**Economic Growth and Development:** to increase job opportunities for all Arkansans by building a stronger economy. (Every dollar invested in the nation's highway system yields approximately \$5.40 in economic benefits.)

**Protection of Our Previous Investments:** to encourage the consistent maintenance and enhancement of highways, roads, streets and bridges to protect our previous investments.

**Increase Efficiency:** to maximize the benefits of future investments by reducing extra vehicle repairs and operating costs; wasted time and fuel; and accident-related costs due to driving on roads in need of repair. (Roads in need of safety improvements and repairs will cost every Arkansan an average of \$1,000 a year in unnecessary vehicle expenses.)

AGRTC's quarterly magazine is another way AGRTC attempts to keep Arkansans informed about current events affecting the financing of Interstates, roads, highways, streets and bridges. Distribution quarterly is approximately 2500. Our website offers up-to-date information and news items affecting the highway financing in Arkansas and nationwide and can be viewed at [www.http://agrtc.com](http://agrtc.com); mail-outs are used as needed with additional information.

We think some of the issues are:

1. Aging bridges, crumbling pavements and deteriorating transit.
2. Congested roads, highways and transit systems.
3. Traffic fatalities and injuries.
4. Demand is stressing the system.
5. Costs are rising – roads and highways that are congested, deficient or lack safety features cost Americans \$249 billion annually in the form of lost lives, time and money.

AGRTC is very pleased about the enactment of ACT 374 which created the Arkansas Blue Ribbon Commission on Highway Financing. AGRTC stands ready to support the Commission's recommendations.

We need your assistance. Membership information can be obtained by calling our office at (501) 375-8566.

Johnnie Bolin