Forsee draws questions for stance on climate bill

The UM System president has written a letter supporting environmental controls but has also urged opposition to it based on the expected costs.

The Associated Press
University of Missouri System President Gary Forsee's business interests are drawing attention after he recently expressed opposition to federal climate change legislation.

Forsee is urging Missouri's congressional delegation to oppose the cap-and-trade legislation.

Some students and faculty at MU said that contradicts a letter he signed supporting reduced greenhouse gas emissions as part of the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reported Tuesday that the former Sprint Nextel CEO has financial interests in companies that oppose climate change legislation. He also has ties to businesses that could benefit from the proposed caps on greenhouse gas emissions.

System spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said Forsee's letter to federal lawmakers "represents his position solely as president of the University of Missouri System" and is not inconsistent with his earlier support for the broader campus effort to reduce greenhouse gases by 80 percent by 2050.

In his letter to lawmakers, Forsee estimated that the four-campus university system would have to spend between $5 million and $8 million to comply with tougher standards.

"While he continues to support green and conservation initiatives that are in everyone's best interest, he remains concerned as outlined in the letter that the University of Missouri will be subject to the financial ramifications of the legislation should it become law," Hollingshead said.

Forsee is a board member of Great Plains Energy, the holding company for Kansas City Power & Light, which opposes the federal proposal. But he also is on the board of Ingersoll Rand, a commercial products manufacturer that, according to its Web site, supports cap-and-trade legislation.

Forsee's brother, David, is the founder of Brookside Capital, a consulting company that invests in renewable and other advanced energy technologies. Gary Forsee has no investment in that company, which David Forsee said would likely stand to benefit if a cap-and-trade bill were approved.

Hollingshead said Gary Forsee's corporate roles do not pose a conflict of interest because board members don't lobby.

Gary Forsee's investment portfolio includes more than $10,000 worth of General Electric stock and another $10,000 in GE bonds, according to a personal financial disclosure statement. GE stands to financially benefit if cap-and-trade were to pass. Forsee also owns more than $10,000 worth of stock in Walmart, Johnson & Johnson, Exxon Mobil, Ford and some 40 other companies.
Math behind Forsee's numbers

By Janese Heavin  Posted December 2, 2009 at 2:01 p.m.

The University of Missouri will spend an extra $5 million to $8 million on energy if cap-and-trade legislation passes, UM System President Gary Forsee said in his letter to federal lawmakers.

The numbers were based on estimates from the EPA and Energy Information Administration, but several have asked me to further explain how those numbers were derived.

I'm no energy economist, so I'll simply relay information I received from Paul Hoemann, director of university energy management. Here's how he breaks down the calculations:

MU generates most of its energy needs and purchases some electricity from the wholesale market. There are various interpretations of potential cap and trade legislation and how it will impact facilities like MU. This document provides a potential worst case scenario of the financial impact of the legislation. Fiscal Year 2013 may be the first full year for implementation of the regulation and was used for the basis of the following estimates.

Coal – If MU is not considered an exempt facility, MU may have to purchase some greenhouse gas (GHG) allowances for coal burned.

Projections for coal purchased were converted to metric tons of carbon dioxide (CO2) equivalent using published conversions from the Energy Information Administration (EIA). MU may initially have to buy up to 30 percent of the GHG allowances. The legislation could allow the cost of these allowances to reach $28/Metric Ton equivalent.

This could increase MU’s cost of burning coal by $2.4 million as follows: 130,000 tons of coal X 2.24 MTons Equivalent CO2/ton bituminous coal X 30 percent X $28/MTon Equivalent = $2.4 million

Purchased Electric – MU purchases some wholesale electricity when it is cost effective. The cost of greenhouse gas allowances purchased by utility companies supplying electricity to the wholesale market could be passed on to wholesale purchasers.
Electric generation in Missouri is primarily coal based which could mean larger wholesale electricity price increases in Missouri compared to many other states. The potential cost of GHG allowances related to purchased electricity may increase MU's purchased power price by up to 50 percent or up to $4 million in additional costs and can be estimated by one of the following methods:

Method 1: FY2013 Purchased Power Impact: $8 million X 50 percent = $4 million
Method 2: (136,000 MwHrs X 0.96 MTons/MWHR) X $28/Ton = $3.7 million

Natural Gas – MU purchases natural gas on the wholesale market. Wholesale prices could increase as greenhouse gas allowances are passed on in the rates. Wholesale customers could see a larger increase than retail customers because fuel is a larger percentage of the wholesale price of natural gas.

Ameren predicts that retail natural gas prices could increase by up to 30 percent. The impact could be higher for MU because MU purchases natural gas on the wholesale market. Increases in the cost of natural gas purchases could potentially be as much as $0.3 million, and can be estimated by one of the following methods:

Method 1: (120,000 MBTU X 0.0531 MTons/MBTU) X $28/Ton = $0.2 million
Method 2: FY2013 Natural Gas Budget: $1 million X 30 percent = $0.3 million

Summary – The total worst case scenario of these three estimated components of MU’s utility cost is about $6.7 million. There is uncertainty regarding the interpretation of final terms of the legislation and regarding the quantities of fuel and purchased power forecasted. Therefore a factor of +/- 20 percent could be applied to account for these uncertainties and the result is a range of about $5 million - $8 million.

EIA sources indicate that the cost for allowances could double between 2020 and 2030. Therefore, there could be an added annual cost impact on MU from all three of the above components. This long term impact could reach $1 million - $2 million per year.

UPDATE: Inventor and retired MU professor died in crash Tuesday

Dr. Henry Liu displays a brick he created by compressing fly-ash from coal fired power plants. The bricks earned one of 10 2007 Invention Awards from Popular Science and was named one of the best environmental inventions of 2007 by Time Magazine. Liu died in the one-vehicle accident Tuesday afternoon off the Lake of the Woods Exit on Interstate 70.

BY Ilene Davis, Katie Maupin

COLUMBIA — The man killed in a single-vehicle crash on Interstate 70 Tuesday was a Columbia engineer and a retired MU professor known for his work in "green" technologies.

Henry Liu, 73, was traveling westbound near mile marker 129.6 when his 2003 Toyota SUV veered off the road striking two trees before coming to rest 200 feet off the road.

When Boone County Fire Protection District firefighters arrived at about 1:45 p.m., the vehicle was fully engulfed in flames. It took responders 10 minutes to extinguish the blaze.

The vehicle was completely destroyed by the fire, and the front end sustained the most damage in the crash.

Liu was pronounced dead at the scene.
Boone County Deputy Medical Examiner Ariel Goldschmidt said Liu died from injuries received during the crash. The cause of the crash is still unknown, according to the Columbia Police Department.

After earning a Ph.D. from Colorado State University, Liu worked as an MU civil engineering professor for more than 20 years. While at MU, he directed the Capsule Pipeline Research Center, which is funded by the National Science Foundation to develop capsule pipeline technology to transport freight.

"Henry was a model professor. He cared about teaching and did a good job teaching," said Mark Virkler, chairman of the MU Civil and Environmental Engineering Department and a former associate of Liu. "He had a very inquisitive mind and was quite ready to take knowledge from one field of engineering and apply it to another."

Virkler said Liu's academic background was in fluid mechanics and that his research led him to look at pipelines being used to transfer solids instead of only fluids.

In 2001, Liu founded Freight Pipeline Co., where he continued to be president.

Liu was awarded the $100,000 Purpose Prize award in October 2009 for developing environmentally-friendly bricks from fly ash — a toxic byproduct of burning coal. This production method is more efficient and does not contribute to air pollution.

"He was in the process of making the world a better place with his inventions," said Carla Roberts, Liu's administrative assistant at Freight Pipeline Co. "We plan to continue the projects that he has in motion now."

The final decisions rest with his family, she said.

Liu held or co-held five patents related to capsule pipelines and one related to combustion safety, according to his company's Web site. He also published more than 100 technical papers and two books.

"He is a hard man to describe because he was so complex. Basically, he is a man of great honor and he had a tremendous work ethic," Roberts said. "We all mourn his loss and will try to honor his legacy."

Contact an editor with corrections or additional information
Missouri to receive $2 million for broadband mapping and planning

By Jeremy Essig
December 3, 2009 | 12:01 a.m. CST

JEFFERSON CITY — The U.S. government will be spending money to get information about Internet lines in Missouri that at least one major telecommunications company has offered to provide for free, but only if the state keeps the information secret.

Gov. Jay Nixon's office announced that Missouri will receive a $1.5 million grant to map out where current broadband lines exist within the state. The federal stimulus grant also provides the state $470,000 for other broadband planning activities.

Currently, the state has approximately 100 broadband providers, the governor's spokesman Scott Holste said. While the location of some broadband lines are known, lines owned by AT&T and others have not been made public.

AT&T does not disclose the location of their lines for competitive and security reasons according to Kerry Hibbs, a spokesman for the company. They would be willing to provide the location to a third-party mapping agency, Hibbs said, under a "strict non-disclosure agreement."

Holste said the state has been in contact with AT&T and others to put non-disclosure agreements in place, but no formal requests have been made yet. As long as the information is protected, Hibbs said, they would be willing to provide it to the state for free.

The mapping project goes beyond just locating the lines, Holste said. The state, in partnership with MU, is collecting information on community broadband anchor points such as schools and courthouses. The mapping project is designed to provide "regional broadband by looking at it block by block," Holste said.
This coincides with a previous announcement that the state is working with Sho-Me Technologies to apply for federal funds to lay new broadband lines throughout the state. These federal funds would then be matched by $25 million in state money.

State Sen. Brad Lager, R-Maryville, who had pushed for mapping to be done in a subcommittee hearing last September, said the governor should hold off on awarding state funds for other broadband projects until the mapping is complete.

"Only government would fund projects before they know what needs to be done," Lager said. "We need to put a hold on all funding until we know where real problems exist."

While Holste said no decision has been made on granting state funds before or after the mapping project is complete, Holste said the state funds will be awarded as soon as federal grant money for the project is approved.

Holste said he expects the federal government to begin announcing grants later this month and continue through February. The mapping project is expected to be completed within two years.
Mo. hopes for more after $2M in stimulus grant for broadband

By Jacob Carpenter
Post-Dispatch Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — With a $2 million grant announced this week, Missouri scored its first win in the nationwide competition for $4 billion in stimulus funding to expand broadband Internet access.

The $2 million, a small chunk of the state’s $142 million request for broadband Internet expansion funds, will be put to additional mapping and planning of which Missouri areas need broadband access upgrades the most. The University of Missouri, broadband providers and local government officials are expected to start the mapping process.

All 50 states have submitted broadband funding applications totaling $28 billion, making the competition for only $4 billion tough.

“This is really the first step, the grant for mapping and planning,” said Scott Holste, a spokesman for Gov. Jay Nixon. “We’re very much pursuing the additional grants that we expect to be announced in the next one to three months.”

The grant bodes well for state officials considering the small controversy surrounding the no-bid government contract awarded to a Washington-based law firm that helped design Missouri’s application for the funds.

More grants are expected to be awarded through March 2010, with both public workers and private companies set to benefit from the cash influx. Holste said the amount of jobs created or saved by the $2 million grant isn’t known, but the work likely will involve county government officials and private companies.

“I don’t have anything even close to definitive” about the number of workers who will be put to work by the grant, Holste said. “There will be more of a handle on how many people are going to be involved in the very near future.”

Tags: Jay Nixon, Missouri, Scott Holste, university of missouri
MU mulls evening program options

Degree caters to adult learners.

By Janese Heavin

Wednesday, December 2, 2009

The University of Missouri’s Faculty Council is proposing the campus do away with the MU in the Evening program not because the degree isn’t valuable but rather to expand evening options, the council’s chairwoman said.

Leona Rubin, a professor of veterinary medicine, is clarifying statements made at a November council meeting, where Professor J. Wilson Watt said the evening degree is perceived as “second-rate.” The comments irked those who have obtained the degree and confused directors of the program because the courses are taught by faculty members.

“This is a degree offered completely in the evening at MU, but it is not a separate degree,” said Dolores Shearon, a spokeswoman for MU Extension, which facilitates the program.

In a letter to faculty members, Rubin called the evening program “successful” but limiting because it only offers a general studies degree, which also can be obtained through the traditional campus. To expand other degree offerings into the evening requires a larger infrastructure than MU Extension and would require full administrative support, Rubin wrote. Doing so would give nontraditional students the same options as day students, she said.

MU in the Evening began about a decade ago to give working adults a way to earn a general studies degree. This fall, 132 students are enrolled in the program.

Under the current administrative structure, adult students have a sort of one-stop shop where they can get the unique support they need, Shearon said. She worries that blending the program into the regular MU campus would dilute those services because schools and colleges already are short-staffed.

“We know that MU departments and divisions provide quality courses. That’s their strength,” she said. “Our strength is making those degrees and courses accessible to nontraditional students and creating a structure where those students can succeed.”

For instance, MU in the Evening holds seats for adults before letting traditional students enroll. Shearon fears by just offering courses at night, traditional students will fill the classes before adults get a chance to enroll. Additionally, she said, most adult students prefer taking courses with other adults.
The specialized support helped Susan Goryl Reeves complete the program in 2003, she wrote in a letter to the Faculty Council. Although expanding course offerings into the evening is desirable, she wrote, Reeves asked that MU in the Evening be preserved for nontraditional students.

"My fellow evening students — who came to class after working eight hours and juggling family commitments — found a place to continue their education, in a program especially geared toward their particular needs and interests while requiring the same coursework and degree requirements," Reeves said.

An alternative to doing away with the program would be adding other degrees to the existing structure. Shearon said MU in the Evening administrators have asked various deans to consider offering more programs in the evening.

"The incentive has not been there," she said. "I don't know whether taking the program back to the traditional campus will create more incentive for programs to be added to the mix. If it does, great — as long as adult student needs are taken care of."

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.
Insurance will likely still cover mammograms for women in their 40s
By Blythe Bernhard

New mammogram guidelines released last month have led to mass confusion, much of it surrounding the question of insurance coverage.

The guidelines from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force said most women under 50 don't need mammograms because the risks outweigh the benefits based on statistical analysis.

Most medical organizations, including the American Cancer Society have long recommended that all women older than 40 receive annual mammograms, X-rays taken of breast tissue to detect abnormal cells.

Nearly all insurance plans cover the $150 to $200 procedure for women in their 40s. About two-thirds of American women 40 and older report having had a mammogram in the previous two years.

The task force, an independent group of preventive health experts sponsored by the federal government, did not take financial or insurance issues into account when it changed its guidelines to recommend routine, universal mammogram screening only every two years for women ages 50 to 74.

The task force's guidelines are only for women at average risk of developing breast cancer and don't apply to women with a family history or other risk factors, who should start screenings earlier. The guidelines also don't apply to diagnostic mammograms, prescribed by a doctor when a lump is detected.

But as far as universal mammograms for women younger than 50, "there are enough harms and the benefit is quite small that women should be able to decide on the basis of their own individual circumstances," said Dr. Michael LeFevre of the University of Missouri-Columbia, a member of the task force.
Some doctors, including LeFevre, say the successful campaigns to promote mammograms have overstated the threat from breast cancer. Heart disease kills eight times as many women each year, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

But the change was instantly unpopular among women who are inundated with pink reminders to get their yearly mammogram. A new Gallup poll found that 84 percent of women ages 35 to 49 still planned to get the test.

A spokeswoman for America's Health Insurance Plans, an industry group, said the new guidelines weren't likely to change coverage of mammograms. Skeptics pointed out that insurance companies have used the task force's guidelines before as a standard for approving or denying payments for other health screenings.

Private insurance companies also tend to follow the lead of Medicare, which is required by law to cover one mammogram between the ages of 35 and 39 and yearly screenings thereafter.

Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said the guidelines didn't change federal policy including Medicare. Other agencies, including the Missouri and St. Louis County governments, also issued statements confirming coverage for younger women.

Missouri requires health insurers who are licensed in the state to cover the cost of one mammogram for women ages 35 to 39, mammograms every other year for women 40 to 49 and annual tests for older women.

But the law doesn't apply to some 2.5 million people in the state who are insured through their employers. Most large employers in Missouri, including the state government, are exempt from the law because they are responsible for their own health plan expenses. The federal government regulates those health plans.

The state law only applies to people who are insured individually or through small businesses.
Still, "in a lot of cases the health coverage (at large employers) is consistent with what the state law covers," said Travis Ford, spokesman for the Missouri Department of Insurance.

Illinois law follows the recommendations of the American Cancer Society to require insurers to cover mammograms for women starting in their 40s. The state also offers free mammograms for eligible women.

Nonprofit agencies like the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure have said they will continue to sponsor routine mammograms for uninsured and low-income women in their 40s.

St. Louis County provides mammograms with funds from the Komen foundation and others to 500 low-income and uninsured women each year.

"We will continue to counsel women to have yearly mammograms starting at age 40," said a statement from Charlie Dooley, county executive.