Senate leader says bond proposal won't progress
By RUDI KELLER

JEFFERSON CITY — A $1.2 billion bond issue passed out of the House last week will go no further, the Senate's top leader said Monday as he laid out priorities for the last week of the legislative session.

Senate President Pro Tem Tom Dempsey, R-St. Charles, said the Senate has not focused on the proposal or the list of projects being considered and needs more time to do so.

"It is a big step to take, and there is a lot of work that needs to be done," Dempsey said. "I intend to spend some time over the interim looking in-depth at the list of projects they consider important and also talking to other senators so we are ready to move on that legislation next year."

The bond issue was mentioned as a priority for the year by Dempsey, House Speaker Tim Jones and Gov. Jay Nixon during their agenda-setting speeches at the beginning of the year. It would pay for new buildings on every four-year state university campus, finance a new high-security building at Fulton State Hospital and fund building renovations and new construction for state government generally.

State Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia, has pushed for the bond issue since taking office in 2009, and this is the second time it has passed through the House only to die in the Senate.

"I think it is the right public policy," Kelly said today. "I hope that all this completely unnecessary delay does not cost us money in terms of interest rates."

Under the proposal, half the money would go to projects on state campuses. The University of Missouri would receive funding for four buildings, including renovation and expansion for engineering programs in Lafferre Hall in Columbia at an estimated cost of $68.4 million. The bond measure would require that each campus provide at least 15 percent of the total funding for each building.

Kelly has argued since 2009 that favorable interest rates and idle construction crews would lower the overall costs in both the long and short term. Missouri has paid down its debt and has not sought a general bond issue from voters since 1994.
"If the state were a family with an income of $50,000, this would roughly be the same as having debt payments of $400 a year," Kelly said. "No one with that ratio would be concerned."

A state bond issue is presented to voters as a constitutional amendment. If approved by lawmakers, the date of the election would be November 2014 unless Nixon chose to put it on an earlier ballot. The late passage in the House just left too little time to deal with it, Dempsey said.

"There is only so much we can work on this year," he said. "If it was going to be an issue, it was going to be voted on in 2014 anyway."
Man pleads guilty in 1999 rape at MU

A man arrested last year and accused in a 1999 rape on the University of Missouri campus pleaded guilty on Monday.

Marvin Jones yesterday pleaded guilty to two counts of forcible sodomy and one count of forcible rape of a female student in a residence hall on the MU campus in 1999.

Boone County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Knight said he would recommend life sentences on all three counts. A sentencing hearing has not been scheduled yet, but Knight said he believes the hearing will take place in either late June or early July.

The rape was reported to campus police Oct. 16, 1999. It happened between 5:15 and 5:45 a.m., when a man entered an unlocked dormitory room in Gillett Hall on the MU campus and found the victim sleeping in her bed, according to court documents.

The Missouri State Highway Patrol Crime Lab was able to collect semen from the victim's underwear, but the analysis of that evidence did not match any DNA profiles on file at the time.

On Oct. 31, MU police received a letter from the highway patrol's crime lab saying that Jones' DNA matched DNA found on the victim's underwear.

Missouri law would have required a profile of Jones to be created as a result of his Oct. 10, 2010, conviction on a charge of second-degree sexual misconduct in Columbia.
Developer says student apartments a good fit for city, MU

By Chris Jasper
May 14, 2013 | 8:22 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — The proposed student apartment complex across the street from Mark Twain residence hall would be a good fit for MU and Columbia because of its location, the project's developers told city officials Tuesday.

Brandt Stiles, the director of development for Collegiate Housing Partners, said the complex, given a tentative completion date of August 2015, would fit the university's plan to develop west campus while avoiding some of the pitfalls of downtown development.

"One of the big issues people talked to us about was that they didn't want student housing in the downtown business district," Stiles said during a public information meeting Tuesday at Daniel Boone City Building. "This (complex) is adjacent to the MU campus, but it isn't quite downtown. We don't feel like there is a better location available."

The complex would be situated south of Conley Avenue between Fourth and Fifth streets.

City of Columbia Development Services Manager Pat Zenner said the complex would be one of the densest residential developments in Columbia, as the six-story building will be able to house 351 students on 1.25 acres.

Developers also addressed the impact of added cars on the roads.

Plans for the complex, submitted April 29, call for 120 parking spaces for cars and additional space for bike parking, far short of the 300 spaces the city normally requires for a development of this size. The Planning and Zoning Commission will address the discrepancy at its June 6 meeting, when it will vote whether to recommend the development to the City Council.

The parking spaces would be housed in the complex's first floor, with the apartments occupying the remaining five floors, according to Stiles.
Stiles said he would work to support the city's FastCAT bus system to transport students. Stiles also said he wanted to work with the MU to allow residents to utilize the university's Bike Share program and its WeCar program.

"We want to make people realize that we can offer smart alternatives to bringing a car," Stiles said.

The developers revealed a digital rendering of the property. It had a red brick and white stone facade, similar to the Brookside complexes downtown.

Timothy VanMatre, the developer's director of operations, said he expected students to be able to move into the 351-bed complex on August 1, 2015.

"The cost will be similar to other complexes in the downtown area," he said.

Rent at Brookside Downtown ranges from $650 to $1,000 a month per person.
Private label food sales increasing, so major brand companies are buying in

You may not think much about store brands as you shop for groceries, but it's a business worth nearly $60 billion per year.

ConAgra, based in Omaha, made a splash recently in what the industry calls private label food when it paid $6.8 billion to buy Ralcorp, based in St. Louis. The merger created the biggest private label food company in the country.

Every major grocer has its own private label brand. Wal-Mart has Great Value. Kroger stores sell Private Selection. Costco has Kirkland. Almost everything at Trader Joe's seems to carry the store's name.

Behind those labels are companies you've probably never heard of, such as Ralcorp or Treehouse Foods. John Stanton, a food marketing professor at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia, recently visited the Private Label Manufacturer's Association conference. He said private label is sort of an anonymous industry.

"There were 150 companies there," Stanton said. "I doubt you've heard the name of one of them."

Now ConAgra, a company known for such national brands as Hunt's and Healthy Choice, is the nation's largest private label food company. Stanton said there was a reason a company with national brands would want to make a big push into private label.

"Private label sales, for at least the last five years, have been increasing," Stanton said. "And it's been accelerated by the recession."

Supermarkets sold $59 billion worth of private label food last year. That's 19 percent of food sales and an increase of about 20 percent since 2007.

Michael Liss, a portfolio manager with American Century Investments in Kansas City, said that growth happened while ConAgra's brands such as Orville Redenbacher popcorn and Snack Pack pudding were stuck in neutral.

"They give (ConAgra) high returns and they have really good market shares in a whole bunch of categories, but they're just not growing," Liss said.

So the Ralcorp merger puts ConAgra at the front of a growing industry and among the biggest food companies in the country, rubbing elbows with the likes of General Mills and Dean Foods.
But Mary Hendrickson, who studies food industry consolidation at the University of Missouri, said Wal-Mart may also be on ConAgra’s mind.

“You’ve seen Wal-Mart move up from selling no groceries in the 1980s to somewhere between 28 and 32 percent of the grocery market today,” Hendrickson said. “That’s very significant.”

According to the trade magazine Progressive Grocer, Wal-Mart sold $118.7 billion in groceries in 2011. Kroger, Walmart’s closest competitor, sold just over half that with $61.1 billion.

Following Walmart’s emergence, other chains began buying up competitors. Concentration has occurred faster in the grocery industry than any other part of the food system. Hendrickson said the top four grocery chains (Wal-Mart, Kroger, Safeway and Supervalu) controlled close to 50 percent of the market.

As they have grown, they have flipped the way food processors and food retailers compete.

In the past, Hendrickson said, companies such as ConAgra used the strength of their national brands as leverage with grocery stores.

“They’ve spent a lot of money making sure people want those brands,” Hendrickson said. “You go into a grocery store that doesn’t have those particular brands and you might say, ‘I don’t want to shop here anymore.’”

But as grocery chains control more shelf space and their private label brands grow, they gain more clout.

“People come in and say I’d like to sell you my cereal and the retailer says well let me tell you how much we’re going to pay for it,” said food marketing expert John Stanton. “They say that’s too little. And they say, go sell it to someone else then.”

Of course, that’s what a company like Wal-Mart is good at. Keeping costs down is what keeps prices low for consumers. But the savings have to come from somewhere, and the ripple effects can reach all the way back to the farm.

“The private labels are going to try to squeeze farmers because they need to come into a lower price, and the branded people are going to squeeze farmers because private labels are coming in at a lower price,” Stanton said.

It’s an example of how competition has evolved in the food industry.

“It could have been Kroger that did this rather than Wal-Mart,” said Mary Hendrickson of the University of Missouri. “It just happens to be Wal-Mart. Their business model was really focused on squeezing out a lot of costs in the supply chain.”

For companies like ConAgra it means looking for new ways to keep up, such as private label foods. As investment manager Michael Liss said, “They’re running hard to stay in place.”
Columbia police are planning additional enforcement efforts to target impaired driving this weekend, with University of Missouri graduation ceremonies scheduled Friday through Sunday.

The enforcement will include a sobriety checkpoint in Columbia at an unspecified time and location sometime over the weekend, according to a Columbia Police Department news release. Overtime for the special enforcement is being funded through a grant from the Missouri Department of Transportation Division of Highway Safety.
JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. • Missouri foster children would be required to receive a college visit under a bill sent to Gov. Jay Nixon.

The Senate passed the bill 31-2 on Tuesday, following House approval earlier this week.

The legislation requires foster children ages 15 through 18 to visit to a Missouri community, technical or four-year college. The visit could be waived by the child’s treatment team.

The bill also provides that children over 18 who leave state custody could return and stay until they are 21. Currently, children can remain in the system until they’re 21 but they cannot re-enter once they leave.

College visits is SB205

Online:

Legislature: http://www.moga.mo.gov