



The Transportation Development Association of Wisconsin is a statewide nonprofit organization that advocates building and maintaining an efficient, reliable and interconnected transportation system that addresses our state's needs for safe mobility and economic growth.

## April 2010

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*If you would like to receive this publication by email, please contact the TDA office at (608) 256-7044 or [general@tdawisconsin.org](mailto:general@tdawisconsin.org).*

## Wisconsin Way Issues Blueprint for Change 2010

After nearly three years of hard, but very rewarding work, the Wisconsin Way issued its Blueprint for Change 2010.

Representatives from the Wisconsin Way partner organizations — the League of Wisconsin Municipalities, the Wisconsin Counties Association, the Wisconsin Education Association Council, the Wisconsin REALTORS® Association, the Wisconsin Transportation Builders Association, the Transportation Development Association of Wisconsin and Wood Communications Group — visited the major newspapers in Milwaukee, Green Bay, Wausau, Eau Claire, La Crosse and Madison on April 8-9. In addition, the partners have begun

to meet with legislative leadership to share the recommendations contained within the Blueprint

In the coming weeks and months, the Wisconsin Way will be making an aggressive effort to get to as many communities as possible to talk with opinion leaders and citizens about the Blueprint. Please visit [www.wisconsinway.org](http://www.wisconsinway.org) for more information about schedules and locations and to register to receive updates.

The Wisconsin Way is a unique partnership of statewide organizations with the goal of finding a new and better way to fund public services.

Visit [www.wisconsinway.org](http://www.wisconsinway.org) to view the Wisconsin Way's Blueprint for Change 2010.

# Executive Perspective

By Craig Thompson, TDA Executive Director

## Lessons of the Zoo Interchange

The recent closing of the Highway 45 North ramp on the Zoo Interchange in Milwaukee was the latest in a series of developments on the state's busiest interchange. Understandably, the closing garnered a tremendous amount of attention. From the traveling public, to the media, to elected officials in southeast Wisconsin – everyone had something to say about the situation. Many people drew conclusions and said there were lessons to be learned from the disruption.

So what are the lessons of the Zoo Interchange?

I believe there are four basic lessons that we can all take from this situation.

First, we all end up paying considerably more when we defer projects and put them off for too long. Whether or not the Zoo Interchange should have come before the I-94 North-South project, it's clear to me that we waited too long to begin the entire southeast freeway reconstruction. As a result of the delay, we put ourselves in a position where this sort of thing – an emergency shutdown of a vital link in our state's transportation system – can happen. We were left with no choice but to build temporary bridges that will have to be replaced. We had to pay workers overtime to work day and night to alleviate a crisis. Our actions will cost all of us more than if we had admitted to ourselves years ago that this reconstruction was going to require additional funding, and anted up.

Second, a disruption like this on any interchange in the state, especially the busiest one in the state, makes us realize just how indispensable these connections are to the most basic functioning of our economy.

Third, we need to depoliticize the transportation process in Wisconsin. The level of funding and the methods of funding will always be a hot

political topic. But clearly analyzing the needs, prioritizing those needs, and putting a price tag on them, need not be – and should not be – a politicized process. The professional engineers and others at the state Department of Transportation must be free to do their jobs and put the cards on the table for us. Once the public and the decision makers have a more clear and concise understanding of the statewide needs, the urgency of those needs, and the cost of meeting them, the political debate can be much more meaningful.

Fourth, the resource Wisconsin has in its workers is truly remarkable. The fact that the temporary bridge was completed as quickly as it was – ultimately, causing as little disruption as it did – is nothing short of amazing. The reason for this phenomenal achievement is the dedicated work of the highly skilled men and women who labored day and night to make it happen.

Let's hope that, as we move forward to tackle our transportation needs across the state in the coming decades, we keep these lessons in mind.

## TDA's 20th Annual Fly-in

On March 10th-11th, more than 70 Transportation Development Association members and other Wisconsin transportation stakeholders visited Washington, D.C., for the 20th Annual TDA Fly-in. During the event, participants heard from key federal transportation policy makers and national transportation advocates, attended office meetings with members of the Wisconsin congressional delegation, and networked with colleagues.

On Tuesday, April 21st, the Fly-in program included presentations by five prominent speakers. Addressing the event's first session were: Dr. Stephen Van Beek, president and CEO of the Eno Transportation Foundation; William L. Kovacs, Senior Vice President of Environment, Technology & Regulatory Affairs at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Dr. Pete Ruane, president and CEO of American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA); Todd Kohr from the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and Alex Herrgott, minority professional staff with the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (EPW).

Dr. Van Beek began the first day's session with perspectives on the current status of the country's ability to move freight and how the transportation proposals being considered could impact the nation's ability to compete with other countries.

William Kovacs from the U.S. Chamber gave an overview of the developments in Washington, D.C., regarding environmental regulations and how future EPA actions could impact transportation policy.

Dr. Pete Ruane of ARTBA, a TDA favorite

who has graciously addressed TDA members at almost every Fly-in, discussed the difficult political situation in the nation's capital and what ARTBA is doing to try and get infrastructure funding to be a priority. He specifically pointed out his concerns regarding the appointment of a deficit reduction commission and the potential for the commission recommendations to include increasing the federal gas tax as a means to reduce the deficit rather than funding transportation needs.

The first day's session ended with an update from the hill. Todd Kohr and Alex Herrgott each gave their assessment of the politics of reauthorization. They agreed that the likelihood of Congress reaching consensus on reauthorization this year was remote. While it is generally understood that the transportation fund is seriously underfunded, there is no political will at this point to talk about a federal gas tax increase according to these top level aides.



The second day of the Fly-in was highlighted by discussions with members of the Wisconsin congressional delegation at the morning session and during office visits in the afternoon. Senator Herb Kohl, Representative Tom Petri and Paul Carver from Representative Dave Obey's office addressed Fly-in participants and answered questions at the Thursday morning session. In addition, Tim James, legislative and political director with the International Union of Operating Engineers, shared his perspectives on the current political climate and the lack of will by politicians of both parties to talk about what needs to be done to adequately fund the country's transportation infrastructure.

Matters discussed with lawmakers at the

*Fly-in continued on page 4*

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afternoon office visits included: the next surface transportation authorization and the need for robust investment, the health of the Highway Trust Fund, the aviation reauthorization and ensuring sufficient funds to maintain a safe and efficient system of air travel, passenger and freight rail and funding for improvements on the Upper Mississippi River-Illinois Waterway and reconstruction of the Soo Locks.

The 2010 TDA Fly-in background and issue papers are available at the TDA website, [www.tdawisconsin.org](http://www.tdawisconsin.org).



## Thanks Fly-in Sponsors

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Wisconsin Transportation Builders  
Association

# Obama Signs HIRE ACT

## Zoo Interchange Bridge Reopens

On March 18th, President Obama signed the Hire Act – Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment Act. While the final bill did not include increased transportation investment like the original House version of the bill, it did contain a number of important transportation provisions. Specifically, the act will:

- Extend surface transportation programs through December 31, 2010.
- Deposit \$19.5 billion into the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) for trust fund interest payments not received since 1998. This infusion of cash is expected to keep the fund solvent into 2013 assuming 2010 spending levels plus small annual inflation adjustments.
- Restore to states \$8.7 billion in highway contract authority that had been rescinded at the end of fiscal year 2009.
- Provide \$42 billion in highway contract authority in 2010 – up from \$30 billion, returning the program to its 2009 level.
- Add \$4.6 billion in federal subsidies for the Build America Bonds. This program created by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) allows states and municipalities to finance projects at interest rates subsidized by the federal government.
- Credit the HTF with interest on its deposits on an on-going basis.
- Redirect payments of fuel-tax exemptions for government vehicles, which are currently paid out of the HTF, to the general fund, increasing money available for highway and transit programs.

Congress now has until December 31st to either complete a six-year surface transportation authorization bill or, more likely, pass another extension pushing off reauthorization until next year.

One week after the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) closed the northbound Highway 45 bridge through the Zoo Interchange, traffic was flowing again.

The decision to close the bridge was made after inspectors determined that the bridge was deteriorating faster than had been anticipated. Deterioration of concrete support girders led WisDOT to announce weight limits on the interchange last August and to hire Milwaukee Constructors, LLC in November to build temporary replacements for three bridges, including the northbound Highway 45 bridge. With the closing, work on the Highway 45 bridge was expedited, and the replacement opened approximately 8 weeks ahead of schedule. The remaining two bridge replacements are still scheduled to open by Memorial Day.

The unexpected closure forced roughly 42,000 motorists a day to detour around the interchange or find alternative routes. It also reignited the debate over whether the Zoo Interchange should have been ahead of reconstruction of I-94 south of Milwaukee on the state's freeway repair priority list. Reconstruction of the Zoo Interchange is currently projected to start between 2014 and 2016.

The Zoo Interchange was built in 1963 and is the busiest interchange in Wisconsin, carrying over 350,000 cars each day.

## Statewide RTA Passes Assembly Committee

After months of different Regional Transit Authority (RTA) bills – for different regions of the state – swirling around the capitol, the Assembly Committee on Transportation approved a statewide bill.

Assembly Bill 282 (AB 282) merged the statewide bill originally proposed by a Legislative Council Study Committee and two separate bills for the Fox Valley and Southeast Wisconsin. AB 282 passed on an 8-2 vote. This legislation would not create any RTAs but would authorize local governments across the state to get together and form an RTA if the local governments choose and if the public votes in favor of the creation of an RTA through a binding referendum. A binding referendum will not be required in Milwaukee County. The authorizing legislation provides the RTA the ability to levy up to a .5% sales tax to fund its operations.

This bill still needs to be taken up and passed by the full Assembly and then passed by the Senate prior to April 22nd, the end of this legislative session, in order to reach the Governor's desk.

If the legislature does not pass or the governor does not sign RTA legislation this session, the process would have to start over again when the new legislature convenes next year.

TDA has been supportive of enabling local communities across Wisconsin to create RTAs.

## Progress on FAA Authorization

The Senate passed a bill (H.R. 1586) reauthorizing Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) programs through September 30, 2011. Additional funding for the \$34.5 billion bill would come from increasing the tax on general aviation jet fuel from 21.9 cents per gallon to 35.9 cents per gallon. Those funds would be directed to the Air Traffic Control System Modernization Account to help pay for the satellite-based "next generation" system for guiding aircraft.

The House passed its version of FAA authorization last year (H.R. 915).

The differences between the two bills will now have to be reconciled by a conference committee. The following differences are likely to take some time to resolve:

- Labor provisions contained in the House bill. The House bill would place ground employees of Federal Express under the National Labor Relations Act, instead of the National Railway Labor Act. This move would make it easier for employees to unionize and put the express carrier on the same footing as UPS.
- Inspection standards at overseas facilities. Both bills would require the FAA inspect overseas repair stations at least twice a year and mandate that safety workers at those facilities pass drug and alcohol tests. The European Union (EU) has threatened retaliatory measures requiring U.S. repair stations to comply with EU standards.
- Antitrust immunity granted to certain airline alliances. The House bill would nullify every airline alliance's antitrust status within three years of enactment and require the airlines to reapply under new rules written by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

## DOT and EPA Finalize New National Standards

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) jointly established new federal rules that set the first-ever national greenhouse gas emissions standards and will significantly increase the fuel economy of all new passenger cars and light trucks sold in the United States.

The final rules, issued by DOT's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and EPA, establish increasingly stringent fuel economy standards under NHTSA's Corporate Average Fuel Economy program and greenhouse gas emission standards under the Clean Air Act for 2012 through 2016 model-year vehicles.

Starting with 2012 model year vehicles, the rules together require automakers to improve fleet-wide fuel economy and reduce fleet-wide greenhouse gas emissions by approximately five percent every year. NHTSA has established fuel economy standards that strengthen each year reaching an estimated 34.1 mpg for the combined industry-wide fleet for model year 2016. Because credits for air-conditioning improvements can be used to meet the EPA standards, but not the NHTSA standards, the EPA standards require that by the 2016 model-year, manufacturers must achieve a combined average vehicle emission level of 250 grams of carbon dioxide per mile. The EPA standard would be equivalent to 35.5 miles per gallon if all reductions came from fuel economy improvements.

The Obama Administration acknowledges the program is expected to add almost \$1,000 to the cost of a vehicle by 2016. However, the up-front technology costs should be more than offset by lower fuel costs over the life of the vehicle.

These rules will hasten the next generation of hybrid and alternatively fueled cars, which in turn shortens the timeline that Congress and state legislatures have to address future transportation funding given declining revenue from the gas tax.

## USDOT's New Marine Highway Program

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood recently unveiled a new initiative to move more cargo on the water. Under the "America's Marine Highway" program, the department's Maritime Administration (MARAD) will help identify rivers and coastal routes that could carry cargo efficiently, bypassing congested roads around busy ports and reducing greenhouse gases.

"For too long, we've overlooked the economic and environmental benefits that our waterways and domestic seaports offer as a means of moving freight in this country," said Secretary LaHood, speaking to transportation professionals at the 7th Annual North American Marine Highways and Logistics Conference in Baltimore. "Moving goods on the water has many advantages: It reduces air pollution. It can help reduce gridlock by getting trucks off our busy surface corridors."

Under the new regulation, regional transportation officials will be able to apply to have specific transportation corridors – and even individual projects—designated by the Department of Transportation as a marine highway if they meet certain criteria. Once designated, these projects will receive preferential treatment for any future federal assistance from the department or MARAD.

The Marine Highway initiative stems from a 2007 law requiring the Secretary of Transportation to "establish a short sea transportation program and designate short sea transportation projects to mitigate surface congestion."

Earlier this year, Secretary LaHood announced \$58 million in grants for projects to support the start-up or expansion of Marine Highways services, awarded through the Department's TIGER grants program. Congress has also set aside an additional \$7 million in grants which MARAD will award later this year.

## Transportation in the News

California – Californian Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has signed two bills that will change how the state taxes gasoline to allow greater flexibility in spending the revenue. The measures swap the current sales tax (6%) on gasoline for an indexed excise tax (17.3 cents per gallon). The California Board of Equalization will adjust this excise tax each year to match the amount that would have been generated by the sales tax. The new 17.3 cents per gallon excise tax will be on top of the state's existing excise tax of 18 cents per gallon. This change in taxation will enable the state to avoid the requirement that a certain percent of the sales tax on gas be used for mass transit, directing more money to the general fund. The legislation allocates other funds to transit agencies.

Missouri – Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) Director Pete Rahn announced that the department will eliminate 400 jobs over the next three years. No employees will be laid off. However, only 25 percent of positions that become vacant will be filled with a new hire. This staff reduction is part of a \$203 million cost-cutting plan that includes many cost saving measures. Some of these measures will be visible to the public such as less mowing, litter pickup, and sign replacement. In a news release, MoDOT stated that state's construction program is on a steep decline due to stagnant state revenue, uncertain federal funding, rising employee benefit costs and no additional money from Amendment 3 bonds.

St. Louis County, Missouri – St. Louis County transit was a big winner on election night. Voters approved a .5 cent increase to the transit sales tax. The \$75 million increase in revenue will be used to restore lost bus and Call-A-Ride service and eventually, expand the reach of mass transit farther into the St. Louis suburbs. If the measure had failed, service would have been scaled back to about half the level it was before Metro's first

round of service cutbacks in March 2009.

Pennsylvania – The U.S. Department of Transportation has rejected Pennsylvania's application to make Interstate 80 a toll highway. Federal Highway Administration officials rejected the state's proposal to toll Pennsylvania's 311-mile east-west corridor because the Pennsylvania application included plans to use toll money to fund transportation projects statewide, not just to operate and maintain the highway itself. This is the third time the state's toll plan has been rejected by the federal government. Governor Rendell says that the state will not resubmit its application.

In response to the loss of potential revenue Governor Rendell said, "I have no preconceived notions, I have no one plan, the only thing I know is that we cannot, this commonwealth cannot, afford for us to do nothing." Rendell called on lawmakers to hold a special legislative session to find ways to replace the projected \$450 million-plus per year tolls would have produced for transportation projects.

Let's Rebuild America – Through the Let's Rebuild America (LRA) initiative, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce advocates for the need to maintain, modernize, expand the nation's infrastructure. This year, the Chamber continues to aggressively push for getting the bigger return on investments, removing the barriers to getting these critical projects underway and increasing public and private investment levels. To that end, the Chamber created a video "Let's Rebuild America's Infrastructure" to bring these messages to key audiences. Visit [http://www.uschamber.com/lra/lra\\_video\\_toolkit](http://www.uschamber.com/lra/lra_video_toolkit) to view the video.

Public Transportation – For the fourth year in a row, Americans took more than 10 billion trips on public transportation last year. However, the 10.2 billion trips in 2009 was 3.8% below

## Interesting News Coverage

*Transportation News continued from page 8*

Wisconsin Public Television, Here and Now, April 2, 2010 – “Efforts to better infrastructure maintenance.” <http://wpt2.org/npa/HAN838.CFM>

Wisconsin Public Television, Here and Now, February 19, 2011 – “Possible solutions down the road”, chapter 2. [http://wpt2.org/npa/HAN832\\_roadways.cfm](http://wpt2.org/npa/HAN832_roadways.cfm)

Wisconsin Public Television, Here and Now, February 19, 2011, fourth segment – “On the roadways”, chapter 1. <http://wpt2.org/npa/HAN831.cfm>

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel April 4, 2010 – “Once a marvel, Zoo Interchange becomes an artifact.” <http://www.jsonline.com/news/milwaukee/89853362.html>

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel March 27, 2010 – “Great Lakes shipping off to good start. Commercial activity hints at upswing in economy.” <http://www.jsonline.com/business/89313467.html>

USA Today March 11, 2011 – “Potholes put dent in city coffers.” [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2010-03-11-potholes\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2010-03-11-potholes_N.htm)

Mississippi Valley Freight Coalition winter edition of Freight Notes is now available. [http://www.mississippivalleyfreight.org/files/MVFC\\_FreightNotes\\_2009-1.pdf](http://www.mississippivalleyfreight.org/files/MVFC_FreightNotes_2009-1.pdf)

the 52-year ridership record set in 2008 as high unemployment and the economic slowdown reduced the number of commuters. Click here to view the ridership report released by the American Public Transportation Association.

Vehicle Registration Fees for Parks – Stateline.org reports that states, especially in the west, are turning to increased vehicle registration fees to fund state parks. Arizona, California, Washington, Idaho and Michigan have either recently increased fees or are considering it this year. This is despite widespread opposition to raising taxes and fees in a recession. The model for these fees is Montana, which implemented a \$4 registration fee to benefit the parks. The fee gives residents free access to the parks, but those who object can opt out of the fee and give up the free access. Between 80 and 85 percent pay the fee.

*Aviation continued from page 6*

- Passenger Facility Charges (PFC). The House bill would raise the cap on such fees from \$4.50 to \$7 per ticket. These funds are used by airports for certain capital improvement projects.

Congress recently extended FAA programs and taxes through April 30th. This is the 12th short-term extension since the last long-term authorization bill expired September 30, 2007. The recent 30-day extension leaves Congress little time to reconcile its differences, making a 13th extension likely.

## Association Notes

### 150 Years of Transit in Milwaukee

TDA congratulates Milwaukee County on 150 years of public transportation. Thanks to the generosity of MillerCoors, Northwestern Mutual and Milwaukee Career College, Milwaukee County Transit System will be able to give special offers to bus riders.

A summary of the celebratory offers is as follows:

- May 7: Ride for FREE all day long on the Route 15 (Oakland-Kinnickinnic). Sponsored by Northwestern Mutual.
- June 9: Free morning rides on all MCTS routes from pull out to 9 a.m. Sponsored by MillerCoors.
- July 4-10: Save \$1.00 off the cost of the Weekly Pass (cost will be \$16.50). Sponsored by Milwaukee Career College.

Other special offers will be announce later in the year.

### Save on AAA Membership, Auto & Home Insurance

Visit the AAA website for a listing of membership benefits. You'll also be eligible for high-quality auto and home insurance coverage through AAA at a discounted TDA group rate too. Keep in mind, even if you already have AAA membership or insurance through AAA, you can save even more under this group plan. Enrollment is convenient through a statewide network of AAA offices.

Go to [www.aaa.com](http://www.aaa.com) or call 1-800-236-1300 to find an office near you.

To receive your AAA discount provide your AAA group number TRN003.

Join today and take advantage of the great benefits and savings.

### Calendar of Events

Transportation Research and Development Data Management Showcase sponsored by the Great Lakes Transportation Enterprise Institute – April 19th at the WisDOT Statewide Traffic Operations Center. Visit [www.greatlakestransportation.org](http://www.greatlakestransportation.org).

Wisconsin Transit Week – May 17th-23rd.

2010 Mid-Continent Transportation Research Forum hosted by the Wisconsin Transportation Center – August 19th-20th in Madison, Wisconsin. Visit <http://epdweb.engr.wisc.edu/Courses/Course.lasso?myCourseChoice=L268> for more information and to register.

*If you know of an upcoming event that would be of interest to TDA members, please forward information to the TDA office, [general@tdawisconsin.org](mailto:general@tdawisconsin.org).*

### Save these Dates

- TDA Drive-in – May 26th
- TDA Golf Outing – August 12th
- TDA Annual Meeting – October 19th

*Visit the events page on the TDA website, [www.tdawisconsin.org](http://www.tdawisconsin.org), for event details and any future changes in the schedule.*

### TDA Moved

TDA moved its office in March. The new address is as follows:

#### TDA's New Address

10 E. Doty Street, Ste. 201  
Madison, WI 53703

Phone and fax numbers did not change:  
(phone) 608-256-7044 and (fax) 608-256-7079.