



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.

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2010 Drive-in Focuses on Solutions

TDA members from across the state converged on Madison on May 26th for the 2010 TDA Drive-in. The focus of this year's Drive-in was solutions. While the state still faces a number of serious problems including an anticipated deficit going into the next budget in excess of \$2 billion, there are efforts occurring across the state to address the state's problems and to place Wisconsin on a better path.

Attendees heard first from Bob Lang, director of the Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau. Lang gave a detailed explanation of the sources of Wisconsin's budget revenue and how it is spent. He also reviewed trends in tax collections

and other economic indicators and ended his presentation with a discussion of the use of transportation revenue for general fund purposes over the last four biennia.

Following Bob Lang, Dan Cunningham, vice president of government relations and education for Forward Janesville, Inc., and Kevin Traas, director of transportation policy and finance with the Wisconsin Transportation Builders Association, presented their work on behalf of the I-39/90 Coalition. Cunningham discussed the coalition, the details of the project and the need for the expansion and the corresponding benefits

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Executive Perspective

By Craig Thompson, TDA Executive Director

Finding Forward

Just because something is simple to understand doesn't mean it's always easy to do. Take exercise. We all know that time spent on the treadmill will keep us healthy, but when that alarm goes off at 5:30 a.m., the right thing to do is not always the easiest. Oftentimes, the snooze button wins.

The principle is the same when the concept is fiscal, not physical. Whether we're running a household or a state government, we all know the only way to budget responsibly is to match spending with revenue. Of course, there are times when a responsible amount of borrowing for capital projects can make sound financial sense. But we also know that going into debt to fund ongoing operations is a major step away from fiscal responsibility. Plain and simple.

Yet, as dangerous as it is to borrow for daily expenses, it can also be incredibly difficult to resist the temptation to do it anyway. Even when we understand that – as many families across the country can attest – once you fall behind, it becomes even harder to maintain fiscal discipline, and the deeper you get the harder it becomes to make the right decisions.

Unfortunately, this is exactly what has happened in Wisconsin and other states. About a decade ago our state fell into a sizable structural deficit. Nonetheless, we convinced ourselves that we could avoid making difficult decisions by utilizing stop-gap measures, like transferring from the transportation fund, until things got better.

A decade later, Wisconsin has transferred more than a billion dollars from the transportation fund to the general fund and yet the general fund continues to find itself billions of dollars in the red. It feels like a video that is running on a continuing loop.

It is time to move forward.

That is why statewide associations representing a broad range of interests have come together to form a coalition called Finding Forward. And that is why, as a coalition, Finding Forward supports amending our state constitution to require that we use transportation user fees for transportation purposes.

The members of Finding Forward have no desire to mete out blame for past transfers or to resurrect old arguments. The goal of the coalition is simply to engage the public in an effort to break the unhealthy cycle Wisconsin is in.

Counties across the state are considering placing an advisory referendum on the November ballot to ask voters whether they agree that Wisconsin's constitution should be amended to prohibit any further transfers from the segregated transportation fund. The Finding Forward coalition will work to provide citizens and opinion leaders across the state with all of the pertinent information so that they may cast an informed vote if they are provided the opportunity.

More than half of the states in this country have language in their constitution specifically protecting transportation user fees. This speaks to the fact that the temptation to misuse the transportation fund is not in any way unique to Wisconsin.

We can move forward. We know what we have to do. The change we seek is pretty simple, but it will require perseverance. The members of Finding Forward are committed to working with communities across Wisconsin to take the first step to raise awareness and give the public a voice. Achieving a constitutional change is a longer, more complicated process, and Finding Forward is committed to being a strong and positive advocate every step of the way.

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for the region. Traas explained how the project could be paid for within the existing base funding for the Majors Program. Speaker Sheridan (D-Janesville) also stopped by the meeting to express his support for the I-39/90 project.

James Wood, president of Wood Communications, presented the Wisconsin Way Blueprint for Change 2010. The Wisconsin Way is a statewide effort led by 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. These partners have joined together with the goal of finding a new and better way to fund public services without lowering our quality of life.

Wrapping up the Drive-in, TDA Executive Director Craig Thompson and Dan Fedderly, executive director of the Wisconsin County Highway Association, presented a campaign to constitutionally protect the segregated transportation fund. Senator Hopper (R-Fond du Lac) and Senator Jeff Plale (D-South Milwaukee), both authors of legislation in this session to constitutionally protect the transportation fund, dropped by the TDA Drive-in to make brief statements on the need to ensure that transportation revenue is only used for transportation purposes.

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I-39/90 Project Moves Forward

Assembly Speaker Mike Sheridan (D-Janesville) joined Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) Secretary Frank Busalacchi in Janesville to announce the completion of the environmental assessment for the proposed I-39/90 expansion.

WisDOT sent the environmental document to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for review, and the secretary expects approval within 30 days. FHWA approval is necessary for the project to be eligible for federal funding.

After federal approval, the project will still need to be enumerated in state statutes. The 15-member Transportation Projects Commission (TPC) was created to review WisDOT's proposals for major highway projects and recommend projects for enumeration by the legislature and the governor. However, due to a lack of available funding to move projects forward, the TPC has not met since 2002, putting many projects, including the I39-90 project, in limbo.

According to an analysis conducted by the Wisconsin Transportation Builders Association, there will be money available in the current base funding level of the Majors Program after 2012 to meet the statutory requirement to begin construction within six years of enumeration.

Speaker Sheridan would like Governor Doyle to convene the TPC before the governor leaves office.

Construction could begin as early as 2015 and take up to five years to complete according to Secretary Busalacchi.

The estimated \$1 billion I-39/90 project would reconstruct the 45.5-mile corridor between Beloit and Madison adding a lane in each direction and creating a six-lane divided freeway with modernized interchanges to enhance safety and improve access.

Kerry/Lieberman Draft Climate Bill Released

Senators Kerry and Lieberman finally released a draft of their long-anticipated climate and energy bill. The bill would require oil companies to purchase carbon emissions allowances, likely increasing the price of gas at the pump, while dedicating little of the proceeds from the new fees to transportation.

The bill, "American Power Act" aims to cut U.S greenhouse-gas emissions 17 percent from 2005 levels by 2020. The proposal would establish a national pollution cap and require all industries, including transportation, to purchase allowances that correspond with their forecast greenhouse-gas emissions.

While the actual amount to be raised by the new fees on gasoline and diesel fuel is not certain, it is estimated to be roughly \$20 billion annually, significantly more than the \$6.25 billion per year the bill would direct toward transportation purposes. Of the \$6.25 billion, approximately \$2.5 billion would be deposited in the Highway Trust Fund for projects consistent with "transportation efficiency planning" factors to be determined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Transportation. The remaining money would be divided between discretionary TIGER grants and state and local mobility projects that reduce greenhouse-gas emissions.

Transportation interest groups, labor unions and business associations – 28 groups in all – sent a letter to Kerry and Lieberman urging them to reconsider the diversion of revenue from transportation-based motor-fuel fees to non-transportation programs, such as federal government debt reduction, discounts for certain heating oil and electricity consumers and reforestation – just to name a few.

"Our concern is that the proposal they've made would preclude action to move forward with vital highway and transit authorizing legislation,"

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Every Day Counts in Project Delivery

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) launched “Every Day Counts”, a new initiative to expedite project delivery, at the American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Spring Meeting.

According to Federal Highway Administrator Victor Mendez the goal of this initiative is to find “better, faster, smarter ways to conduct business.” The ultimate goal is to cut project delivery time in half and more quickly move innovation into practice.

Some of the early recommendations that have been developed as part of Every Day Counts include:

- Expediting environmental reviews and project planning including, the consideration of environmental factors during the planning phase;
- Expanding use of programmatic agreements;
- Greater use of “in lieu” fees and mitigation banking;
- Enhancing FHWA technical assistance on delayed environmental impact statements to resolve project delays;
- Clarifying the scope of preliminary design;
- Bringing lawyers in at the early stages of project development to smooth legal sufficiency reviews;
- Using existing flexibility for right-of-way acquisition;
- Offering more flexibility for utility accommodation and relocation; and
- Encouraging routine use of “design/build” contracts even for smaller projects.

Every Day Counts initiatives will also seek to expand the use of five construction techniques to support faster project delivery and safety.

These techniques include: warm-mix asphalt, prefabricated bridge elements and systems, geosynthetic reinforced soil, safety edge on rural two-lane roads and adaptive traffic-control technology (ACS).

FHWA will hold nine regional summits in the fall to gather industry input on implementing the goals of Every Day Counts.

Emergency Transit Assistance Proposed

Eight senators introduced a bill that would authorize emergency financial support for transit authorities in big cities in order to avoid further service cuts amid declining budgets.

Bill sponsors include Senate Majority Whip Richard Durbin (D-IL), Senate Democratic Caucus Vice Chairman Charles Schumer (D-NY) and Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee Chairman Chris Dodd (D-CT).

The Public Transportation Preservation Act would authorize \$2 billion in federal grants that could be used to cover some operating expenses by transit agencies in areas with more than 200,000 residents. Generally, these public transportation providers may only use their federal grant money for capital expenditures.

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) has endorsed the bill as the emergency money would not affect current capital funding. APTA has previously expressed concerns about using federal funding for operating expenses if it would lead to reduced capital spending as well as possibly diminished local and state support for transit services.

If passed by both chambers and signed into law, the grants would still have to be appropriated as part of the U.S. Department of Transportation budget.

FHWA Launches New Freight Congestion Tool

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced a new tool to help shippers and carriers avoid key traffic chokepoints on some of the nation's busiest roads. State and local transportation agencies can also use the information to prioritize their highway investments and target congestion relief.

The new web-based tool, Freight Performance Measures (FPMweb), measures operating speeds for trucks at any given place and time along 25 interstate highways that are significant freight routes.

"It's all about using innovative technology to save time and money and to boost commerce and the economy," said Federal Highway Administrator Victor Mendez. "Timely and accurate information on freight movement will benefit both government and private sector in making transportation decisions."

FPMweb, developed as part of multi-year FHWA research initiative with the nonprofit American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI), is a first-of-its-kind effort to capture information on truck travel speeds from around the country through onboard GPS and satellite technology.

The tool is available at www.freightperformance.org/fpmweb/user_login.aspx. FHWA and ATRI also released the *2009 Bottleneck Analysis of 100 Freight Significant Highway Locations* report based on the research available at http://www.atri-online.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=248&Itemid=75.

Public Input Sought: USDOT Strategic Plan

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) is seeking public comment to finalize a new strategic plan for transportation. According to a statement released by the USDOT, the plan, "Transportation for a New Generation", helps set the priorities for the department and offers a blueprint for providing the traveling public with safe, convenient, affordable and environmentally sustainable transportation for the 21st century.

In the statement, the department acknowledges that the U.S. benefited in the 20th century from building highways and aviation networks that fueled unprecedented economic growth and individual mobility.

"However, in the 21st century, policies and individual investment decisions for highways, public transit, railroads, seaports, inland waterways, and airports often lacked an outcome-driven approach and at times conflicted with each other and with important national priorities. Transportation for a New Generation restores the focus of transportation decisions to the people and their communities," according to USDOT.

Visit <https://dotstrategicplan.ideascale.com/> to view the draft plan and public comments.

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said John Horsley, executive director of the American Association of State and Highway Officials (AASHTO). "It would divert revenues away from transportation and make it impossible to pass the next six-year bill. We're asking the two senators to reconsider what they are doing. If they do exact substantial revenues through their mechanisms, they need to channel every dollar to the Highway Trust Fund to enable us to move the transportation bill forward."

Transportation in the News

Florida – Governor Charlie Crist vetoed a \$160 million raid of the transportation fund included in next year’s budget. Crist’s veto of the raid would have triggered a corresponding cut to per-student education funding under the budget passed by the legislature. However, Crist also vetoed a provision that linked the raid on the transportation fund to school spending. Lawmakers believed that the budget language, which included the link to education, would prevent the governor from vetoing the raid. The House Speaker has threatened legal action, claiming the governor exceeded his legal authority. Legislative leaders are also evaluating an override of the veto.

Kansas – Governor Mark Parkinson signed into law an \$8.2 billion, 10-year transportation plan called T-WORKS. The program is financed through bonds, a sales tax increase and higher vehicle registration fees for heavy trucks. Kansas Transportation Secretary Deb Miller says her department will now be able to invest heavily in highway and bridge preservation projects and make additional investments in capacity improvements such as interchange and bypass projects designed to unclog traffic chokepoints and boost economic development.

Michigan – Michigan will lose \$475 million in federal highway funds and 12,000 jobs unless the state can come up with an additional \$87 million in state matching funds according to a report commissioned by the Michigan Chamber of Commerce. The report also shows that the state would see a net gain of 15,000 jobs if the state doubled the level of transportation funding from \$2.1 billion to \$4.4 billion. The authors of the report say this level of funding could be accomplished by doubling vehicle registration fees and increasing the gas tax from 19 cents to 38 cents. The state gas tax has not been increased since 1997.

Interesting News Coverage

National Journal Experts Blog – “Should mass transit get \$2 billion in emergency operating aid?” <http://transportation.nationaljournal.com/2010/06/should-mass-transit-get-2-bill.php>

Stateline.org June 2, 2010 – “States find road money hard to come by” <http://www.stateline.org/live/details/story?contentId=488639>

Trains Magazine May 28, 2010 – “Railroads may reject high speed projects” <http://www.trains.com/trn/default.aspx?c=a&id=6875>

The Journal of Commerce May 27, 2010 – “Lawmakers bare partisan divide on highway taxes” <http://www.joc.com/government-regulation/lawmakers-square-highway-funding>

NPR May 26, 2010 – “LaHood envisions the future of transportation” <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=127137816>

Politico.com May 17, 2010 – “James Oberstar stymied on transit bill” <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0510/37328.html>

In Business Magazine May 1, 2010 – “Will buses lose out to new rail lines?” <http://www.ibmadison.com/transportation?id=486>

Brownfield, AG News for America, April 27, 2010 – “USDA releases agricultural transportation study” <http://brownfieldagnews.com/2010/04/27/usda-releases-agricultural-transportation-study/>

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Minnesota – The MnPASS Express Lane on I-394, the first high-occupancy toll road in this part of the nation, has been in service for five years. The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is using this anniversary to highlight the initiative's success. A second project on I-35W opened in September 2009. Almost 19,000 customers currently use the expanded network – a 51 percent increase in the past 12 months. The vast majority of the trips cost \$2.50 or less. On all but a handful of days, drivers were able to maintain a speed of at least the posted limit. According to a survey conducted by MnDOT, 91 percent of respondents are satisfied with their experience using the Express Lanes, 63 percent say the best thing about the lanes is the time savings and approximately 84 percent say their trip on the lanes is fast, safe and reliable.

North Carolina – Governor Beverly Perdue urged the legislature to create the North Carolina Mobility Fund, a dedicated fund to build road and other transportation projects she and supporters say are needed to keep the state's economy growing. The proposal would generate approximately \$300 million annually by 2013 through higher drivers' fees, the end of a trade-in sales tax break on new car sales and the use of other sources of revenue. Perdue said it would be shortsighted of the legislature to avoid the issue because election-year worries over fees or taxes.

Pennsylvania – Governor Rendell called a special session to address a \$427 million shortfall in the transportation budget. The deficit was created last month when the Federal Highway Administration again rejected Pennsylvania's application to toll Interstate 80. However, the governor is asking the legislature to do more than just plug the whole. He says the legislature needs to raise about \$3.5 billion annually to pay for broader transportation needs. Increasing the

state's 32.3 cent-per-gallon gas tax is the most obvious option to increase revenue according to Rendell, but he also suggests increasing the oil company franchise fee. Increased revenue would allow the state to address a backlog of 5,600 structurally deficient bridges and 7,000 miles of roads in poor condition, plus provide funds for important transit investment. "This approach will require courage, but in my mind, it's the only solution that will have a lasting legacy for generations to come," Rendell said.

Public Transportation and the Elderly – The rapidly growing segment of Americans 65 and older will necessitate an annual increase in operating and capital costs of up to \$3.9 billion by 2030 according to an American Public Transportation Association (APTA) report. The report highlights the increased operational needs of the senior population, which is projected to increase by 79% in the next 20 years. "For millions of Americans older than 65, public transportation is critical to maintaining independence and quality of life. But like any valuable service, ours comes with expenses – expenses that will increase as the number of people we serve dramatically increases."

VMT and Congestion on the Rise – After a two-year decline in the number miles driven by Americans, it appears that people are getting back on the road. According to the report issued by the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics: "From December 2007 through June 2008, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) declined at a rate of approximately 1.2 billion per month. From July 2008 to December 2009, VMT seems to show signs of resuming its upward growth at an average monthly increase in the trend of 200 million VMT."

Likewise, congestion in America's metropolitan regions increased during the first three months of

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Association Notes

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Calendar of Events

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.

Save these Dates

- TDA Golf Outing – August 12th
- TDA Annual Meeting – October 19th
- 2011 TDA Fly-in – March 30th-31st

Visit the events page on the TDA website, www.tdawisconsin.org, for event details and any future changes in the schedule.

this year. The Federal Highway Administration's Urban Congestion Report shows that all three measures of congestion increased compared to the same quarter last year. Average duration of weekday congestion went up by five minutes from 4:16 to 4:21, the time index went up by one point from 1.19 to 1.20, and the planning time index measuring the variability and unreliability of traffic went up three points from 1.47 to 1.50. Of the 22 metro areas analyzed 12 showed worsening traffic conditions, four had mixed results and six showed improvements.

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