

## September 2008

### IN THIS ISSUE

Construction Costs Climb .....	2
GAO Examines Proposals .....	2
Transportation News .....	3
Association News .....	4

The Transportation Development Association of Wisconsin is a statewide, nonprofit educational organization working for an efficient and environmentally responsible transportation system that addresses safe mobility and economic growth.

*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).*

# Marquette Interchange - Open for Business

Last month, Governor Doyle officially declared the Marquette Interchange open for business. The Marquette Interchange – the largest transportation construction project in state history – was completed months earlier than scheduled and under budget.

The Marquette Interchange was also built safely. There were no fatalities or serious injuries for any of the more than 4,000 workers involved on the project or for the thousands of motorists that continued to use the interchange during construction.

Every day, more than 300,000 cars and trucks use the interchange of I-43, I-94 and I-794. The Marquette Interchange serves as a regional hub for factories, distribution centers and retailers. It is a critical link to the Port of Milwaukee, the new Milwaukee Intermodal Station and General Mitchell International Airport. The interchange also serves as a gateway to major manufacturing centers in places

like Green Bay and Manitowoc and national tourism destinations in Door County and Sheboygan.

Visit the TDA website, [www.tdawisconsin.org](http://www.tdawisconsin.org) to view TDA's press release on the completion of the Marquette Interchange.



## Construction Costs Continue to Climb

Ever increasing material costs are squeezing state transportation budgets and causing real reductions in the actual amount of construction work put in place, according to a new American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) economic report. A major spike in diesel fuel, steel and asphalt were the driving forces behind a 19 percent jump in highway and street construction materials in June compared to the same month in 2007. The increase in July was over 21%. Over the last five years, 2003-2008, the price of highway and street construction materials has risen almost 77%.

“When you take into account rising construction costs, including material prices, the actual volume [nationally] of construction work performed on highways and bridges so far in 2008 is down about five to seven percent,” said Alison Premo Black, ARTBA economist and vice president of policy.

Follow the link below for more information.  
[http://www.artba.org/economics\\_research/recent\\_statistics/prod\\_price\\_index/prod\\_price\\_index.htm](http://www.artba.org/economics_research/recent_statistics/prod_price_index/prod_price_index.htm)

### Wisconsin Not Exempt from Rising Costs

Construction inflation in Wisconsin last year was 17.2% and is reflected in the August update of the financial status of major highway projects. The WisDOT report shows that inflation increased the cost of completing 27 current major highway projects by \$307 million since the last report earlier this year.

In accordance with state law (2003 Wisconsin Act 217), the financial status of major highway projects in Wisconsin must be updated every six months.

The report also includes an update on the status and projected cost of major highway study projects.

Follow the link below to view the latest status report <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/projects/state/sixyear/docs/status-spreadsheet.pdf>

## GAO Examines Proposals

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently issued an analysis of seven proposals to restructure federal surface transportation policy. The report included review of policy papers from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the American Road and Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA), the Bipartisan Policy Center's National Transportation Policy Project, the Brookings Institution, the National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Financing Commission, the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission and the Transportation for America Campaign.

The GAO found that all of the stakeholders agreed that reform of the nation's surface transportation system is necessary, and it identified the following common themes:

- Define a federal role in freight and goods movement
- Link transportation policy and funding to the environment and energy sectors
- Promote better management of existing assets
- Incorporate performance and accountability into transportation programs
- Use multiple funding sources

The report also evaluated the extent to which the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission's recommendations align with principles the GAO has developed for evaluating proposals to restructure and fund surface transportation programs.

Follow the link below to view the GAO's analysis.  
<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08843r.pdf>

# Transportation in the News

Milwaukee – With a vote of 11-4, the Common Council overrode Mayor Tom Barrett's veto of an annual \$20 per car local vehicle registration fee, commonly referred to as a wheel tax. The new fee will be added to Milwaukee residents' state vehicle registration renewal notices beginning in November.

The fee is expected to bring in an estimated \$6.6 million a year. Approximately half of this revenue will be used to eliminate special assessments for repaving and replacing streets and to cut assessments for sidewalks and alley projects. The remaining money will cover other maintenance and construction costs.

While state law allows every county and municipal government to enact such a fee, it is currently only being used by Milwaukee, Beloit and St. Croix county.

Wisconsin Special Committee on Regional Transportation Authority – The first meeting of the Special Committee on Regional Transportation Authority was held on August 7th. Representatives from the American Public Transportation Association and the Federal Transit Administration made presentations to the committee and answered questions.

The special committee is directed to review and provide recommendations on how to create a statutory framework enabling counties, cities, villages, and towns to create regional transportation authorities (RTA) to promote regional cooperation on transportation issues. This is to include: the funding mechanisms to be used to support an RTA; the method of creation of an RTA, the representation and participation of member units of government on an RTA; the types of transportation services that an RTA could be authorized to administer; and the scope and limits of other RTA authority.

The next meeting of the committee will be September 17th at 10 a.m. in 412 East, State Capitol.

Mississippi Valley Freight Coalition – *Freight Notes*, the newsletter of the Mississippi Valley Freight Coalition, summer 2008 is now available. Follow the link below to view the newsletter.

[http://www.mississippivalleyfreight.org/files/FreightNotes\\_Summer2008.pdf](http://www.mississippivalleyfreight.org/files/FreightNotes_Summer2008.pdf)

Alaska – Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, who is also the vice presidential nominee for the Republican Party, recently signed a bill suspending the state's motor-fuels tax for a year to help residents cope with high energy costs.

The state of Alaska has the nation's lowest gas tax at 8 cents per gallon, but its gas prices are the highest, averaging over \$4.50 per gallon.

According to Palin, the state can afford this suspension as high gas prices have created a large state budget surplus. Alaska shares oil and gas royalties with all residents while imposing no statewide income or sales tax, creating essentially a state of negative taxation.

Arizona – Arizona voters will not get the opportunity this fall to vote on a proposal that would have increased the sales tax one penny for 30 years to pay for a \$42 billion transportation plan. Backers of the plan fell nearly 15,000 signatures short of the 154,000 needed to make the ballot according to the Arizona Secretary of State's Office.

Pennsylvania – The American Trucking Association and the state affiliate, the Pennsylvania Motor Truck Association, oppose Pennsylvania's innovative financing plans to either toll Interstate 80 or lease the Pennsylvania Turnpike to a private consortium. Instead, the organizations are calling on the legislature to increase the state's fuel taxes by a dime per gallon and also increase the state's annual vehicle registration fee. Currently, Pennsylvania's gas tax is 31.2 cents per gallon and the annual registration fee is \$36.

*Transportation news continued on page 4*

# Association News

*Transportation news continued from page 3*

## Calendar of Events

2008 Wisconsin Transit Conference - September 8th -10th in Waukesha. For more information, visit [www.wurta.com](http://www.wurta.com).

Meeting of the Special Committee on Regional Transportation Authority – September 17th at 10 a.m. in 412 East, State Capitol.

Transportation Information Center Winter Road Maintenance Seminars – Follow the link below for seminar dates, locations, and other information. Link: [tic.engr.wisc.edu/Workshops/Listing.lasso](http://tic.engr.wisc.edu/Workshops/Listing.lasso)

2008 WisDOT Annual Freight Railroad Conference - November 19th in Madison. Go to the “What’s New” section on the TDA website, [www.tdawisconsin.org](http://www.tdawisconsin.org), for more information and a registration form.

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

- Wisconsin Freight Rail Day, September 29th
- TDA policy forum – Transportation: Our future rides on it – Wednesday & Thursday, November 12th & 13th
- 2009 TDA Fly-in – Tuesday & Wednesday, April 21st & 22nd

*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.*

Hydrogen Road Tour – Hydrogen fuel cell cars from nine automakers completed a 13-day cross-country trip – the first crossing of its kind – at the end of August. The tour, which stopped in 31 cities and 18 states, was intended to show that hydrogen vehicle and fueling technologies are approaching commercial viability.

“The technology necessary to put these cars on the road, and keep them moving exists today,” said Administrator Paul Brubaker of the USDOT’s Research and Innovative Technology Administration. “The question is not if hydrogen powered vehicles will be available commercially, but when.”

Tour’s website: [hydrogenroadtour08.dot.gov](http://hydrogenroadtour08.dot.gov).

## Interesting News Coverage

Baltimore Sun August 4, 2008 – “Finding funds in tolls and taxes”. <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/bal-md.dresser04aug04,0,6837661.column>

Washington Post August 5, 2008 – “A Mass Transit Mess”. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/04/AR2008080401977.html>

USA Today August 17, 2008 – “Drive 55 campaign gaining speed”. [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-08-17-Drive-55\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-08-17-Drive-55_N.htm)

Encompass, The AAA Colorado Magazine September 2008 – “The presidential candidates sound off on the future of America’s highways, bridges and transit systems”. [http://www.encompass-mag.com/2008/09/transportation\\_talk.html](http://www.encompass-mag.com/2008/09/transportation_talk.html)

Congressional Quarterly September 3, 2008 – “Mica Tries to Sell McCain on Great Transportation Overhaul”. <http://www.cqpolitics.com/wmspage.cfm?docID=news-000002943473>