



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.

## July 2010

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## Coalition Announces Plans to Protect Transportation Fund

Speakers representing a broad-based coalition of county and municipal government, private businesses, organized labor, agriculture, non-profit associations, regional planning interests, housing organizations and other groups held a news conference on June 28th at the state capitol to call for constitutional protection of the state's transportation fund.

The coalition, called Finding Forward, supports amending the Wisconsin constitution to require that money in the state's transportation fund be spent only for transportation purposes. As a first step in that process, Finding Forward supports placing an advisory referendum question on

this November's election ballot so that voters can weigh in on whether the transportation fund should be specifically protected from being used to fill gaps in the state's general fund budget or for any other non-transportation use.

Craig Thompson, executive director of the non-profit Transportation Development Association of Wisconsin, a coalition member, spoke at the news conference. "Transferring segregated transportation funds should not be viewed as a tool to manage through tough times. It is a trap that makes the tough times worse and the recovery longer. The evidence is clear," he said.

*Press conference continued on page 3*

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# Executive Perspective

By Craig Thompson, TDA Executive Director

## Fast Forward

Good ideas get attention. Great ideas generate action. Judging by how fast the groundswell of public support for safeguarding Wisconsin's transportation fund is turning into action, protecting the fund is a great idea – and an idea whose time has come.

That action is taking several forms. An increasing number of county boards, for instance, are voting to place an advisory referendum question about the transportation fund on this fall's election ballot. And more and more groups are joining the Finding Forward coalition, which was formed to help give the public a voice in making sure money in the transportation fund is invested in transportation and not used for unrelated purposes.

Last month I wrote about Finding Forward and its efforts to gain constitutional protection for Wisconsin's transportation fund. The coalition enjoys a broad-based membership – more than 30 organizations have joined so far, including county and municipal government, private businesses, organized labor, agriculture, non-profit associations, regional planning interests, housing organizations and other groups. TDA is proud to be a Finding Forward member and supports the coalition's efforts to engage the public in a positive initiative to help Wisconsin move forward on transportation funding policy.

I also noted that placing an advisory referendum question on the fall ballot in as many counties as possible is one of Finding Forward's goals. Such a referendum is a constructive way to give voters the chance to tell their elected officials that protecting the transportation fund is important.

This month I want to let you know that Finding Forward is doing great work and building some real momentum in terms of increasing public engagement on this issue. Already, for example, nine counties have voted to place the referendum

on the November ballot, and many more will be voting on it soon.

Finding Forward held a very successful news conference at the state capitol in Madison to launch the information campaign. All three Madison television stations covered the event, as did statewide print and radio media, and the story is still very much in the public eye as I write this, with reporters contacting TDA and other groups to follow up on Finding Forward. Visit the coalition's website, [www.FindingForwardWisconsin.org](http://www.FindingForwardWisconsin.org), to see the media attention and public interest this issue has created in just the past few weeks.

Now it's time for you to take action. As you know, Wisconsin has borrowed from the transportation fund to shore up ongoing general budget needs in the past, and at the present, there's nothing to stop the state from doing it again. An amendment to the state constitution is a positive step in the right direction of returning our state to the economic stability of responsible budgeting and helping Wisconsin find a way forward.

So I urge you to help increase awareness of the need to protect the state's transportation fund by amending the Wisconsin constitution. Contact your county supervisors to let them know you support a constitutional provision to protect the transportation fund, and encourage them to let voters have a say by putting the question on the ballot. Don't forget to talk to state Senate and Assembly candidates, too, to ask them where they stand on the issue.

More than half of the states in the nation have constitutions that specifically protect their transportation funds. Together we can add Wisconsin to that list and move forward toward needed investment in transportation and a more secure and prosperous future.

*Press conference continued from page 1*

Terry McGowan, business manager for the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 139, also spoke at the conference and said that past transfers from the transportation fund have had “a direct impact on the ability of the 9,000 men and women of the operating engineers to make a living, pay their bills, and make purchases right here in Wisconsin.”

Allison Bussler, director of public works for Waukesha County, spoke in support of the advisory referendum and noted that her county’s board had already voted unanimously to place the question on the fall ballot. Wisconsin, she said, “has failed to invest in a timely manner in vital infrastructure like the Zoo Interchange, mass transit and aviation.” Further, Bussler said, the past practice of using general obligation bonds to repay portions of the borrowed transportation funding has hurt the state’s bond rating and the debt service on these bonds hinders its ability to fund important county programs such as youth aids, community aids and courts.

To date, the following nine county boards have voted to include the advisory referendum on the November ballot: Adams, Grant, Jackson, Lincoln, Marathon, Pepin, St. Croix, Waukesha and Vilas.

Thompson said he was heartened by Finding Forward’s desire to engage the public in a positive initiative to help Wisconsin move forward out of its budget rut. “More than half of the states in the country already have constitutional protection for their transportation funds,” he said. “I’m just really impressed with the breadth of this coalition. These groups have many different interests but are united on this important issue. This coalition is not interested in assessing blame for how we arrived at the current situation. We just want to find a way forward.”

Follow the progress of the coalition at [www.FindingForwardWisconsin.org](http://www.FindingForwardWisconsin.org).



## Americans Paying Record Low Gas Taxes

Americans are paying the lowest gasoline taxes since the early days of the automobile according to an analysis done by USA Today.

Drivers this year will pay just \$19 in gas taxes for every 1,000 miles driven. In inflation-adjusted dollars, that is half of what drivers paid in 1975.

Looked at another way, Americans spent just 46 cents on gas taxes for every \$100 of income in the first quarter of 2010. That’s the lowest rate since the government began keeping track in 1929.

During the first quarter of 2010, motorists will pay approximately \$55.7 billion on federal, state and local gas taxes, the Bureau of Economic Analysis reports. That’s down from \$68.5 billion in 2000 after adjusting for inflation — even though Americans are driving more miles annually than they did a decade ago.

Visit [http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/energy/2010-07-01-gas-tax\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/energy/2010-07-01-gas-tax_N.htm) to read the USA Today article.

# WisDOT's Response to Hoan Bridge Frustrates Locals

Later this month, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) will install plastic netting to catch chunks of concrete that are falling from the underside of the deck of the Hoan Bridge. This response doesn't satisfy many local officials who believe WisDOT should also begin the engineering work that will be necessary for a long-term fix.

Despite the falling concrete, WisDOT says the underpinnings of the bridge remain sound. The netting is "routine maintenance" while the department considers its options.

Knowing that money to fix the bridge will be hard to come by, two area lawmakers and Milwaukee Mayor and gubernatorial candidate Tom Barrett have developed differing proposals to obtain federal funds for the project.

State Senator Jeff Plale (D-South Milwaukee) and State Representative Christine Sinicki (D-Milwaukee) have sent a letter to federal officials requesting to divert \$250 million of the more than \$800 million grant for a high-speed rail line between Madison and Milwaukee to the bridge repair. According to all sources, this will not happen. "If the funding isn't used as applied for, it won't be used in Wisconsin," said David Frey, a spokesman for Congresswoman Gwen Moore, who was asked to help secure the funding. "It will go to another state for use there."

Mayor Tom Barrett, in a letter to WisDOT Secretary Busalacchi and the co-chairs of the Joint Committee on Finance (JFC), requested that \$50 million of an unexpected \$105 million in additional federal highway aid be allocated to Hoan Bridge engineering and repairs.

WisDOT has already submitted a plan for the additional funds as required by state statutes. The plan calls for using the vast majority of these federal funds to replace state funds in 2010, resulting in more state funds rolling into

2011. The funds could also be used to offset the transportation fund deficit of approximately \$30 million. The plan is subject to a 14-day passive review by the JFC, with no action required by the committee unless a member objects.

In its July 9th editorial, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel urged state officials to "stop considering options for the deteriorating Hoan Bridge and start work on a long-term fix."

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## Aviation Program Extended Again

President Obama signed another short-term extension of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) authorization, extending FAA operations and programs through August 1st. The bill, H.R. 5611, allows the FAA to continue to collect fuel and ticket taxes to fund the Airport and Airway Trust Fund and to make expenditures from the fund.

This is the 14th extension since the FAA authorization expired on September 30, 2007.

The House and Senate have each passed new authorization bills and are still working to reconcile the differences. Negotiations to date have been conducted informally, mostly at the staff level.

## Poll Finds Waning Support for Rail Projects

Support for two rail proposals, high-speed rail between the cities of Chicago, Milwaukee and Madison and commuter rail between Milwaukee, Racine and Kenosha (KRM), has declined in the Milwaukee area since last September according to the People Speak Poll. Current support for high-speed rail and KRM is 41 percent and 42 percent, respectively. This is down from 57 percent support for high-speed rail and just slightly less support for KRM last fall.

In contrast, a new question about adding lanes to I-94 between Milwaukee and Waukesha resulted in 49 percent in favor and 39 percent opposed, with the rest voicing no opinion.

The poll also found that the majority supports a half-cent sales tax to fund the Milwaukee County bus system, despite having concerns about empowering a regional transit authority (RTA). In the current poll, support for the RTA is 35 percent.

The People Speak Poll is a collaborative effort of the Center for Urban Initiatives and Research at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the Public Policy Forum and The Business Journal Serving Greater Milwaukee. These partners administer a public opinion poll for metropolitan Milwaukee — Milwaukee, Waukesha, Washington and Ozaukee Counties — three to four times a year.

Visit <http://epic.cuir.uwm.edu/peoplespeakpoll/> to view the poll results.

## AASHTO Release Report on Freight

The U.S. is facing a freight crisis. Investment well beyond the current levels is needed in the nation's highways, railroads, ports and waterways just to maintain performance, not to mention needed capacity enhancements.

This is according to a report issued by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). The report, *Unlocking Freight*, identifies projects in 30 states that would improve freight delivery and dependability and offers a three-point plan to relieve freight congestion, and thereby increase productivity and generate jobs.

In Wisconsin, the report highlights the following projects to enhance freight capacity: the Interstate 39/90 corridor, Interstates 94/894 and the Zoo Interchange, Interstate 94 North/South and U.S. 41.

To address the coming crisis, AASHTO recommends building the necessary capacity improvements, creating and funding a national freight program and investing in intermodal connector improvements.

“To accommodate this predicted growth in freight movement, we need to think nationally, regionally and on a multimodal level,” said Tennessee Transportation Commissioner Gerald Nicely at a news conference for the release of the report. “Central to this effort should be the creation of a National Multimodal Freight Plan to ensure that transportation investments are coordinated and made where most needed. By linking trucks, rail, waterway transport, and aviation, freight can be moved more efficiently throughout the nation.”

*Unlocking Freight* is the second in a series of reports published by AASHTO to identify increased capacity needs of the U.S. transportation system. The first report, *Transportation Reboot: Unlocking Gridlock*, focused on needed improvements to the highway system.

# ARTBA Testifies before the National Debt Commission

In its testimony to the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, the American Road and Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) urged the commission to embrace the “pay-as-you-go” transportation user fee system.

For more than 50 years, the federal highway, transit and aviation investment programs — financed almost exclusively by gasoline taxes and fees levied on users — have proven to be fiscally responsible while providing critical improvements to the nation’s transportation infrastructure. Such a “pay-as-you-go” transportation financing system has no net impact on the budget deficit and should continue to be the means for future investments, according to ARTBA.

Projected Highway Trust Fund revenues for the foreseeable future will be far short of the levels necessary to maintain current physical and performance conditions. “Without additional revenues, Congress has only two options — fund the programs at the level supportable by Highway Trust Fund revenues, which would cause serious deterioration of our highways and transit systems, or close the gap with general funds, which would significantly increase the federal budget deficit,” ARTBA warned.

ARTBA testified that one of the most reliable ways to reduce the deficit is to assure the future budget-neutrality of the federal transportation investment programs by generating additional user fee revenues. Options for additional revenue include: increasing federal gasoline and diesel taxes and indexing them to inflation, establishing a freight services charge on the value of transportation provided by commercial trucks to support a new goods movement program such as the association’s “Critical Commerce Corridors” program, and creating a per barrel tax on oil. Expanded public private partnerships and tolling could also be used to supplement the

more traditional means of financing transportation improvement programs.

Earlier this year, President Obama signed an executive order establishing the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform. The commission’s objective is to put forward proposals to balance the budget excluding interest payments on the debt by 2015 and to meaningfully improve the nation’s long-term fiscal outlook. The commission is led by former Clinton White House Chief of Staff Erskine Bowles and former Republican Senate Whip Alan Simpson.

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## Transportation in the News

Wisconsin, Madison – It is unlikely a referendum to fund the Dane County Regional Transit Authority (RTA) will be on the November ballot. The issue is the RTA area includes some divided wards along the border where two ballots would have to be created. The Dane County Clerk’s office has been working on a system to identify which voters are within the RTA boundary, but staffing issues may make being ready for a November election difficult. While Madison Mayor Dave Cieslewicz would like to see the referendum on the fall ballot, Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk feels a November referendum is premature.

Virginia – Virginia has eliminated much of the state’s funding for regional secondary-road programs due to budget shortfalls. The state’s decision to focus on existing primary-road projects that handle more traffic and are eligible for federal funding will result in the cancellation of many local projects. “We are seeing the secondary-road pavements continue to age and deteriorate, and we simply do not have enough

## Interesting News Coverage

ABC News: July 5, 2010 – “Increase in near-collisions of planes raises concerns about air traffic control competence” <http://abcnews.go.com/WN/inexperience-air-traffic-controllers-causing-rise-mid-air/story?id=11091111>

USA Today: July 6, 2010 – “Budget cuts leave tall grass, weeds” [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2010-07-05-mowing\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2010-07-05-mowing_N.htm)

The Kansas City Star: July 4, 2010 – “Car is no longer king when it comes to policy” <http://www.kansascity.com/2010/07/03/2061386/car-is-no-longer-king-when-it.html>

The Journal of Commerce: June 30, 2010 – “Railroads to outpace truckers in recovery” <http://www.joc.com/trucking/railroads-outpace-truckers-recovery>

USA Today: June 29, 2010 – “Gas taxes give us a break at the pump” [http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/energy/2010-07-01-gas-tax\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/energy/2010-07-01-gas-tax_N.htm)

USA Today: June 25, 2010 – “Spending on local projects plummets” [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2010-06-25-construction\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2010-06-25-construction_N.htm)

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Editorial: June 22, 2010 – “Maintenance required. Candidates for governor and the state Legislature need to address issues of highway maintenance in Wisconsin, and then do something about those issues next year.” <http://www.jsonline.com/news/opinion/96926664.html>

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: June 20, 2010 – “A logjam over Wisconsin infrastructure” <http://www.jsonline.com/business/96771454.html>

Pittsburgh Tribune-Review: June 19, 2010 – “Advocates fail to agree on how to pay for roads” [http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/state/s\\_686772.html](http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/state/s_686772.html)

MinnPost.com: June 17, 2010 – “Oberstar points to road problem: a shortage of federal

gas-tax revenue” [http://www.minnpost.com/derekwallbank/2010/06/17/18994/oberstar\\_points\\_to\\_road\\_problem\\_a\\_shortage\\_of\\_federal\\_gas-tax\\_revenue](http://www.minnpost.com/derekwallbank/2010/06/17/18994/oberstar_points_to_road_problem_a_shortage_of_federal_gas-tax_revenue)

Wisconsin State Journal: June 2, 2010 – “Governor’s race: Candidates diverge on transportation priorities” [http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt\\_and\\_politics/elections/article\\_ae89cb52-7bc5-11df-aae0-001cc4c03286.html](http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt_and_politics/elections/article_ae89cb52-7bc5-11df-aae0-001cc4c03286.html)

CFIRE News spring edition is now available. <http://www.wistrans.org/cfire/news/newsletter/Spring2010.pdf>

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*Transportation News continued from page 6*

resources at this time to address those needs,” said Jeff Caldwell, a Virginia Department of Transportation spokesperson. Fairfax County, the state’s most populous, has seen its share of state funding for secondary-road maintenance decrease from \$29 million in 2004 to \$238,000 last fiscal year to \$1,939 in the current fiscal year.

Bicycles and Pedestrians – According to a report released by the Federal Highway Administration’s Pedestrian & Bicycle Information Center, walking and bicycle rates have increased over the last 15 years. The report, *The National Bicycling and Walking Study: A 15-Year Status Report*, also documents improved safety. From 1993 to 2008, bicycle fatalities decreased 22 percent and injuries decreased 15 percent. Pedestrian fatalities dropped 12 percent during this same time and injuries dropped by 18 percent. “According to the 2009 National Household Travel Survey, bicycling and walking now account for 11.9 percent of all trips,” U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary wrote in his blog. “It’s not the 15.8 percent we hoped to see, but – considering the increase in population and overall number of trips – it’s progress.”

## Association Notes

### TDA Golf Outing

Spend time networking with other transportation professionals while enjoying a summer afternoon on the golf course. Members are encouraged to bring guests.



**Thursday, August 12, 2010**  
Tee times begin at 11:00 a.m.  
at the  
Door Creek Golf Course  
4321 Vilas Road  
Cottage Grove, WI

Visit the TDA website, [www.tdawisconsin.org](http://www.tdawisconsin.org), for more information and a registration form.

### Calendar of Events

TDA Golf Outing – August 12th at the Deer Creek Golf Course in Cottage Grove. Visit the TDA website, [www.tdawisconsin.org](http://www.tdawisconsin.org), for more information and a registration form.

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.

Wisconsin Concrete Pavement Association Summer Golf Outings - August 4th in southeast Wisconsin and August 26 in northeast Wisconsin. Visit <http://www.wisconcrete.org/calendar.html> for more information.

14th Annual Civil & Environmental Engineering Golf Outing - September 16th at the Oaks Golf Course in Cottage Grove. Visit the TDA website, [www.tdawisconsin.org](http://www.tdawisconsin.org), for more information.

*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 Annual Meeting – October 19th
- 2011 TDA Fly-in – March 30th-31st

*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.*

### 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.

