



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.

## September 2010

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## Transportation Fund Referendum Reaches Milestone

Voters in at least 51 of Wisconsin's 72 counties will have the opportunity to make their voices heard on the importance of keeping the state's transportation fund intact. Specifically, the boards in these counties voted to add an advisory referendum question to the fall ballot to ask voters whether the Wisconsin constitution should be amended to prohibit the transfer or use of money in the state's transportation fund for purposes not related to transportation.

Three counties – Langlade, Oneida and Rock – are still expected to take up the issue this month prior to the deadline for filing with the county clerk.

Visit [www.FindingForwardWisconsin.org](http://www.FindingForwardWisconsin.org) for an up-to-date listing of counties with the referendum question on the fall ballot.

### **Racine Advisory Referendum September 14th**

Racine County is the only county to include the advisory referendum question on the primary election ballot September 14th. All of the other counties listed above will ask the question on the November 2nd ballot.

If you are a registered voter in Racine County, please make sure to vote **YES** on September 14th to tell your legislators to keep transportation dollars in transportation.

# Executive Perspective

By Craig Thompson, TDA Executive Director

## Early Success, but Now the Real Work Begins

The momentum to protect transportation funds in Wisconsin continues to grow. More than 50 counties across Wisconsin have stepped up and voted to place an advisory referendum on the fall election ballot. This early success has exceeded our expectations, but there is a lot of work left to do if we are to truly change course in Wisconsin.

The next step, of course, is to continue educating the public and encourage them to vote **YES** on the advisory referendum question. The most immediate task is in Racine County. Unlike the remainder of counties that have voted to place the advisory referendum question on the November ballot, Racine County opted to place this question on the September 14th ballot.

A strong **YES** vote on Tuesday in Racine will be an important opening salvo in the battle ahead to restore integrity to the state's transportation fund.

We need everyone in the transportation community to be actively involved in this effort both leading up to the vote on Tuesday in Racine and for November 2nd in counties across the state.

What can you do? Go to [www.FindingForwardWisconsin.org](http://www.FindingForwardWisconsin.org) (media center) to get background information, important facts, frequently asked questions as well as one-page fliers and signs that are designed to be reproduced for distribution. Then reach out and share this information with employees, co-workers, friends and family.

Finding Forward partners are currently mailing this flier to their members in Racine County. Others are reproducing the sign created by Finding Forward to be displayed in their members' stores and places of business.

Any correspondence you can have with contacts in Racine County needs to occur this

week, as Tuesday is election day.

Building upon what we hope will be a positive opening round in Racine, we will need to engage the public across the state before November 2nd. In addition to the items listed above we need to seize upon every opportunity to get this message in front of people. Ask the candidates running for the state legislature in your area where they stand on constitutionally segregating the transportation fund. Invite Finding Forward to address local rotaries and other civic groups. (Contact the TDA office, and we will do our best to have a representative of Finding Forward available to present to an interested group.) Write a letter to the editor about the importance of this effort.

The early success of this initiative demonstrates that stopping future raids on transportation funding resonates far beyond transportation interests. It is incumbent upon us to take hold of this opportunity and parlay it into a movement that our state elected officials cannot ignore.

Thank you for all the work that so many of you have already done as well as the efforts I know you will be making in the coming months.

## Senator Kohl Sponsors Bill to Increase Truck Weight Limits

Senator Kohl joined Senators Mike Crapo (R-ID) and Susan Collins (R-ME) to introduce a bill (S. 3705) that would allow states to authorize the operation of trucks weighing up to 97,000 pounds on their interstate highways, up from the current federal limit of 80,000.

The bill would require the vehicles have an additional axle and set of brakes. Accordingly, a six-axle truck with 97,000 pounds would have roughly the same breaking capacity and weight distribution as a five-axle truck carrying 80,000 pounds. The bill would also increase the heavy vehicle tax for vehicles authorized to operate under this legislation with the funds dedicated to bridge investments in those states that authorize use of the heavier trucks.

“This bipartisan legislation strikes the right balance between productivity and safety,” said Senator Kohl. “This common sense bill will make a big impact on the countless businesses and industries that depend on trucks to move their products. I’ve met with a number of people in Wisconsin who say this legislation will make their business more efficient and allow them to invest in their company and add jobs. This legislation will allow us to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, cut air pollution, and keep American businesses competitive.”

In release expressing support for the bill, the American Trucking Association stated, “Operation of these more efficient vehicles will allow trucking companies to deliver the nation’s freight while making fewer trips. The result will be a reduction in the number of truck-involved crashes, less fuel use – and thus reduced emissions and carbon – and less congestion on our crowded highways. Fewer miles traveled also means less pavement damage, lowering highway maintenance costs.”

Identical legislation (H.R. 1799) has been introduced in the House.

Congress is unlikely to take up these bills this year, instead dealing with the issue of truck weight and size during the reauthorization of surface transportation programs.

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## Governor Calls for TPC Meeting

Governor Jim Doyle recently announced that he will call a meeting of the Transportation Projects Commission (TPC) this fall. The commission will review a number of potential major highway projects before making a recommendation to the next governor and legislature on which projects should be enumerated in the 2011-13 budget.

According the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, the following projects are ready to be put before the commission:

- Interstate 39/90 – 45 mile expansion from four to six lanes between Beloit and Madison;
- State Highway 38 – improvements and lane expansion between Racine and Oak Creek;
- State Highway 15 – expansion from two to four lanes between Appleton and New London and
- U.S. Highway 10/State Highway 441 – expansion between County CB and Oneida Street from four to six lanes.

Statutes prohibit the commission from recommending projects unless there is sufficient funding to allow construction to begin within six years, which is why the commission has not met since 2002. With the completion of a backlog of old projects, funding will become available in the existing Major Highway Program budget to begin new projects within this time frame.

# President Puts Forward \$50 Billion Transportation Investment Plan

While at a Labor Day event in Milwaukee, President Obama announced a \$50 billion plan to rebuild America's roads, rails and runways.

"I want America to have the best infrastructure in the world," Obama told the crowd.

This proposal is among a set of targeted initiatives that the president will outline in Cleveland on Wednesday that the White House hopes will lead to an economic recovery and long-term sustainable growth.

The president stated that his plan will be fully paid for and will not add to the deficit over time, acknowledging that the public is uneasy over government spending and the level of debt.

Not surprisingly in this political season, Republicans declared this proposal a continuation of what they claim is a failed stimulus program.

Below are the details of the proposal from the White House fact sheet:

The president's plan over the next six years would include:

- **Roads:** Rebuild 150,000 miles of roads – renewing the commitment to the backbone of the nation's transportation system;
- **Railways:** Construct and maintain 4,000 miles of rail – enough to go coast-to-coast;
- **Runways:** Rehabilitate or reconstruct 150 miles of runway – while putting in place a NextGen system that will reduce travel time and delays.

The president's plan would accomplish these improvements through an up-front investment in the nation's infrastructure. This initial investment would fund improvements in the nation's surface transportation, as well as airports and air traffic control system.

The president proposes to combine increased investment with a long-term framework to

reform and expand investment in transportation infrastructure. "If we are to enjoy the benefits that come from a world-class transportation system, Congress must enact a long-term reauthorization that expands and reforms our infrastructure investments and returns the transportation trust fund to solvency. To jumpstart job creation, this long-run policy front-loads – through a \$50 billion up-front investment – a significant share of the new infrastructure resources."

The reforms envisioned as part of the long-term framework include:

- The establishment of an Infrastructure Bank to leverage federal dollars and focus on investments of national and regional significance;
- The integration of high-speed rail on an equal footing into the surface transportation program;
- Streamlining, modernizing, and prioritizing surface transportation investments, consolidating more than 100 different programs and focusing on using performance measurement and "race-to-the-top" style competitive pressures to drive investment toward better policy outcomes.
- Expanding investments in areas like safety, environmental sustainability, economic competitiveness, and livability – helping to build communities where people have choices about how to travel.

## Public Transit Health Benefits Undervalued

A new report, released by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) has found that public transit improvements and more transit-oriented development can provide large health benefits which are often overlooked or undervalued in conventional transportation planning.

*Evaluating Public Transportation Health Benefits* includes the results of several recent studies and finds that people living in transit-oriented communities tend to drive significantly less and rely more on alternative modes of transportation – walking, cycling and public transit.

This shift in modes leads to a number of health benefits for the community including lower rates of fatal vehicle accidents, less pollution and increased physical fitness.

“Public transportation enhances the overall quality of life of an individual and a community,” said APTA president William Millar. “Use of public transit simply means that you walk more which increases fitness levels and leads to healthier citizens. More importantly, increasing use of public transit may be the most effective traffic safety counter measure a community can employ.”

The report concludes, “When all impacts are considered, improving public transit can be one of the most cost effective ways to achieve public health objectives, and public health improvements are among the largest benefits provided by high quality public transit and transit-oriented development.”

## Marine Highway Corridors Announced

On August 11, 2010, U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood laid out the department’s plans for America’s Marine Highway Program. The department identified 18 marine corridors – including routes through the Great Lakes – for further development under the program. Transportation projects along these corridors are eligible for grant assistance.

The Secretary also announced the selection of eight marine highway projects for designation under the program. These projects represent new or expanded marine highway services. None of the projects are in Wisconsin but include projects like the development of cross-border passenger service between Detroit and Windsor, Ontario, and expanding a container-on-barge service operating between Newark, N.J., Boston and Portland, Maine.

The America’s Marine Highway Program aims to promote the movement of freight on the nation’s waterways as a means to mitigate congestion on the highways and railroads, improve the environment and reduce U.S. dependence on oil.

# Report Highlights Importance of Connecting Rural America

According to *Connecting Rural and Urban America*, a new report recently released the by American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), more investment is needed in nation's rural transportation system to keep agriculture, new energy products, and freight moving; improve access for the tourism industry; connect new and emerging cities; and to ensure reliable access to key defense installations.

"Improving connectivity and mobility for the 60 million Americans who live in rural areas is just as important as improving mobility for those who live in metropolitan areas," said John Horsley, executive director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. "Rural states are essential to the nation's success, not only to meet the needs of their own citizens, but also to maintain their part of the national network on which the U.S. economy depends."

Key findings from the report include:

- Sixty-six cities with populations of 50,000 or more - including one state capital - do not have immediate access to the Interstate system.
- During the next 30 years, 80 percent of the nation's population growth is expected to concentrate in the South and West.
- In 2008, almost one out of eight people aged 65 and older lived in rural areas. This elderly population exceeds 9.6 million people and relies heavily on rural roads and public transit systems for their transportation.
- Many of the nation's most popular tourist destinations experience significant traffic delays.

AASHTO recommends the following plan to ensure the connectivity of the rural and urban areas of the nation:

1. Continue to fund rural portions of the Interstate Highway System and other Federal-aid highways that connect the nation;
2. Double federal investment in rural transit systems to meet rising demand; and
3. Expand the existing capacity of the Interstate system, upgrade rural routes to Interstate standards, and connect newly urbanized areas to the Interstate system.

*Connecting Rural and Urban America* is the third in a series of reports generated by AASHTO to identify the need to increase capacity in our transportation system to unlock gridlock, generate jobs, deliver freight, and connect rural and urban America.

## Transportation in the News

California – A plan to fast-track some L.A. public transportation projects is gaining support. The "30/10" mass transit initiative put forward by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa proposes that revenue from a portion of a sales tax approved by the voters in 2008 be used as collateral for long-term bonds and a federal loan in order to expedite construction of 12 key transit projects. Instead of the 30 years currently planned, the projects would be completed in 10 years.

According to Robert Puentes, senior fellow of the Brookings Institution metropolitan policy program, cities across the nation are looking to Los Angeles as a model for financing their own transit projects with voter-approved tax increases.

Existing federal programs could provide the necessary funding mechanism, but Congress

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## Interesting Coverage

would need to make some modifications.

Senator Boxer (D-CA), chair of the Environment and Public Works Committee, has expressed strong support for the initiative stating, "Right here in Southern California, the residents of Los Angeles County are providing new thinking and leadership when it comes to building the kind of city we all want to see for everyone in L.A. What is happening here is also providing a model for similar approaches across the country."

Idaho – A new state study finds that heavy trucks underpay in Idaho compared to their wear and tear on roads, while motorists overpay. This is only one factor a task force formed to make recommendations on transportation funding will consider before submitting its report to Governor Otter this December. Otter established the task force a year ago after pushing for more road funding for years without success.

The Idaho Trucking Association takes issue with the study stating that it is "ignoring the substantial contribution commercial trucks already make to our economy, our employment base and our highway tax structure."

Pennsylvania – The Pennsylvania Transportation Commission approved an updated 12-year transportation program that reflects a 24 percent reduction in funding for improvements to highways, bridges, mass transit, aviation and freight rail. Uncertainty about the next 6-year surface transportation reauthorization, lost revenue from a failed proposal to toll I-80 and the end of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding contributed to the projected funding cuts.

"The reductions outlined in the new 12-year program are a dramatic example of where we are headed," said Pennsylvania Transportation Secretary Allen Biehler.

Governor Rendell has crisscrossed the state to call attention to unmet transportation needs.

Wisconsin State Journal: August 30, 2010 – "State highway chiefs call for \$600B for road work" [http://host.madison.com/news/state-and-regional/wisconsin/article\\_e3e081d6-f43f-5711-95a4-c0d364e9f4bf.html](http://host.madison.com/news/state-and-regional/wisconsin/article_e3e081d6-f43f-5711-95a4-c0d364e9f4bf.html)

Transportation Nation: August 30, 2010 – "First steps for Obama's DOT, seen through a Bush Administration lens" <http://transportationnation.org/2010/08/30/first-steps-for-obamas-dot-seen-through-a-bush-administration-lens/>

New York Times: August 27, 2010 – "China's growth leads to problems down the road" [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/28/world/asia/28china.html?\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=gridlock%20china&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/28/world/asia/28china.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=gridlock%20china&st=cse)

The Daily Reporter: August 26, 2010 – "Michigan road group pushes for more repair money" <http://dailyreporter.com/blog/2010/08/26/michigan-road-group-pushes-for-more-repair-money/>

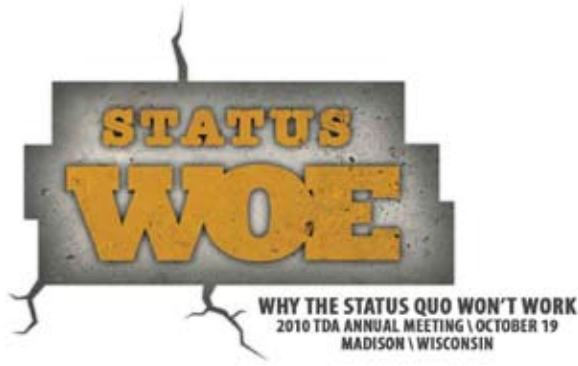
Green Bay Press Gazette: August 14, 2010 – "DOT broadens plans for 'marine highway' in Great Lakes" <http://www.greenbaypressgazette.com/article/20100814/GPG03/8140541/1247/DOT-broadens-plans-for--marine-highway--in-Great-Lakes>

PBS BLUEPRINT AMERICA: August 12, 2010 – "WWID or What would Ike do?" <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/blueprintamerica/web-only-features/the-no-13-line-wwid-or-what-would-ike-do/1064/>

Access, the magazine of the University of California Transportation Center: Spring 2010 – "Just road pricing" [http://www.uctc.net/access/36/access36\\_JustRoadPricing.shtml](http://www.uctc.net/access/36/access36_JustRoadPricing.shtml)

## Association Notes

### TDA Annual Meeting October 19th



The TDA Annual Meeting will be held on October 19th in Madison at the Monona Terrace. Registration materials will be emailed later this week and will be available on the TDA website, [www.tdawisconsin.org](http://www.tdawisconsin.org).

### Calendar of Events

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.

Freight Rail Day 2010 Sponsored by Wisconsin's Freight Rail Industry - October 4th at the Wyndham Milwaukee Airport Hotel and Convention Center. Visit <http://public.gratz.elitemail.org/Rail%20Day%20docs/Registration%20Form%20%2710-3.pdf> for registration 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

- 2010 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.

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