

From the Office of Gov. Mark Dayton

17 County Officials Join Chorus Calling for New, Dedicated, Sustainable Transportation Funding

17 officials join local leaders from across the state who have spoken out for a real transportation funding solution

Yesterday, 216 county officials from across the state stressed the need to resolve transportation this session

Altogether, local officials from 80 Minnesota counties have weighed in with their support for new, dedicated, sustainable revenues for transportation

ST. PAUL, MN – Across the state, Minnesotans and local leaders are calling for new, dedicated, and sustainable funding – including a modest gas tax increase – to address Minnesota’s critical transportation funding needs. Just yesterday, Granite Falls Mayor Dave Smiglewski noted that ["we've seen the corner getting turned on the gas tax. There's a lot of interest in that because something has to happen."](#) This followed the release yesterday morning of [a letter from 216 county officials](#) across Minnesota calling for a long-term transportation funding solution for roads, bridges, and transit this session. All but 18 Minnesota counties [have already had to raise local taxes](#) in recent years in order to pay for essential transportation improvements. Under the Dayton-Smith transportation proposal, cities and counties would receive [an additional \\$240 million per year](#) in new revenues for transportation.

This statewide support for a sensible transportation solution isn't new. For months, Minnesotans and local leaders across the state have been speaking up – in meetings, newspapers, and letters – to call on their elected officials to represent their interests, and get a transportation plan done this session with new, dedicated, sustainable funding. Altogether, local officials from 80 Minnesota counties have weighed-in with their support for new, sustainable, dedicated revenues for transportation.

This is not a partisan issue – Minnesota county commissioners, mayors, and local leaders from across Minnesota are following the lead of 18 states (and Washington D.C.) that [have passed gas tax increases to help resolve transportation funding deficits](#), similar to Minnesota’s transportation crisis. More than half of those gas tax increases were passed or signed into law by Republicans, including in Idaho, Iowa, Georgia, Michigan, Nebraska, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming.

17 More County Officials: New Transportation Investments Needed Now

Today, 17 more county officials from across Minnesota joined the chorus of Minnesotans and local leaders calling for new, dedicated, and sustainable funding to address Minnesota’s critical transportation funding needs.

"Carver County is a rapidly growing county that provides significant economic benefit to the state and a high quality of life to the people of the twin cities region. The county has jurisdiction of 270 miles of roadway and 55 bridges and though our comprehensive planning process we have determined \$660 million in needed county road and bridge investment by 2040. Our own share of the gas tax and local revenue like the wheelage tax and property tax cannot generate enough funding to maintain and construct an adequate local and state transportation system. I urge the Minnesota

legislature to pass a gas tax to increase funding for trunk highways and local roads in our county and the rest of Minnesota."

Randy Maluchnik, Carver County Commissioner

"Chippewa County is responsible for the maintenance and construction of roads and bridges across an area that covers more than 580 square miles. We need long-term, sustainable funding dedicated to transportation because our roads and bridges are falling part. The Minnesota Legislature must take action this session and provide new funding, rather than asking counties to continue bearing the cost alone. Legislators should consider increasing the state sales tax, dedicating auto parts sale tax revenue, and increasing the gas tax to pay for roads and bridges."

Jim Dahlvang, Chippewa County Commissioner

"Goodhue County is short on transportation funding and needs increased state and federal revenue to keep pace with costs. As county officials, we need to be sure that after design and possible land acquisition, which can take two to three years, that funding will be there to deliver the project. We are currently postponing projects, which if done sooner would be less costly because of this funding uncertainty. I support an increase in funding across the state. I feel the gas tax is an integral part of the solution. Please support long term funding so we as county commissioners can work with you to maintain and improve the road system in Minnesota."

Brad Anderson, Goodhue County Commissioner

"After using all current available funds, Goodhue County's unmet road and bridge funding shortfall is in excess of \$26 million over the next ten years. Additionally, there are 20 Structurally Deficient township bridges in Goodhue County that need to be replaced. Unfortunately, these funding gaps will continue to grow if there are not enough transportation funds to keep pace with the deterioration of our County and Township Road and Bridge systems. I ask the state legislature to help us make these critical investments by passing a long-term transportation funding solution that includes new gas tax revenue. A rebate of a portion of the State Budget Surplus would soften the impact of this increase in the gas tax, which actually is a user's fee."

Greg Isakson, Goodhue County Engineer

"Kandiyohi County needs at least \$9 million to make much-needed improvements to our roadways and bridges. Unfortunately, implementing a wheelage tax isn't enough to pay for these needs. I urge the Minnesota Legislature to pass a gas tax to ensure long-term funding for county roads across the state, including those Kandiyohi County. Furthermore, economic growth in Kandiyohi County is stymied by the lack of money for trunk highway expansion. The 'HWY 23 Gap' needs to be filled!"

Roger Imdieke, Kandiyohi County Commissioner

“I think it is time for the legislature to set aside partisan politics and pass a comprehensive and sustainable transportation funding plan. This plan should include multiple funding sources, including a gas tax. These investments are critical to the economic viability of Lac qui Parle County and its residents.”

Todd Patzer, La Qui Parle County Commissioner

“Olmsted County has more than \$96 million in unmet road and bridge funding needs. No county should have to shoulder this kind of burden alone. We’ve done our part – passing wheelage and local-option sales taxes. Now, I urge the legislature to pass a gas tax increase as part of a comprehensive transportation funding bill that will provide assistance to Minnesota counties so we can make needed investments in roads, bridges, and transit.”

Sheila Kiscaden, Olmstead County Commissioner

“Steele County maintains over 366 miles of roads and 129 bridges across 432 square miles of land. We passed a wheelage tax, but that’s insufficient to cover our local transportation needs. It’s critical that the legislature take responsibility this session and approve long-term funding, including the gas tax, to help counties across the state of Minnesota with road and bridge maintenance.”

Nina Huntington, Steele County Commissioner

“We need to invest in our roads, bridges and transit system to maintain the economic competitiveness and vitality of the Twin Cities and all of Minnesota. In Hennepin County alone we have more than \$200 million in unfunded road and bridge projects. These projects are critical to commerce and safety. On transit, we are poised to make critical investments that will fill in the missing pieces of the 21st century transit system that we need for the entire region. The metro counties support a sales tax only in the metro area to support this expansion. A sales tax in the metro area is the same approach used by other successful regions around the country to build out their transit systems -- Phoenix, Dallas, Salt Lake City, Seattle, to name a few. A metro sales tax would free up General Fund dollars now supporting transit operations and eliminate millions of dollars in state bonding dollars now sought to cover the state’s 10 percent share of these project. This approach is good for the metro area and good for Greater Minnesota.”

Peter McLaughlin, Hennepin County Commissioner

“Benton County has more than \$13 million worth of unfunded transportation projects, including 5 miles of reconstruction along County Road 78, which will remain unfunded unless the state takes action. I urge the state of Minnesota to support new revenue that will secure sustainable, long-term funding for these transportation projects.”

Ed Popp, Benton County Commissioner

“Dakota County is growing every year, with over 100,000 new residents expected by 2040. We face an estimated \$33 million annually to maintain and expand our County highway system. With 413 miles of roads and 80 bridges, the county needs significant new transportation funding to provide a safe and efficient transportation system. I ask the legislature to support the funding and expansion of Minnesota transportation by passing a comprehensive, sustainable, multimodal transportation bill.”

Nancy Schouweiler, Dakota County Commissioner

“Hennepin County is Minnesota’s most populous county at nearly 1.2 million people and is host to one third of the state’s jobs. We maintain nearly 2,500 miles of road and bridge lane miles that need hundreds of millions of dollars in repairs. Our levy and other revenue can only cover a fraction of the ultimate cost. Hennepin County has done its part, and now I ask state lawmakers to do theirs and pass a comprehensive transportation solution – roads, bridges, and transit.”

Mike Opat, Hennepin County Commissioner

“In Kanabec County, we are responsible for the maintenance and construction of 428 miles of roads and 74 bridges. It’s time for the legislature to take action and provide new funding for roads and bridges, instead of asking counties to shoulder an even greater burden.”

Gene Anderson, Kanabec County Commissioner

“Washington County is expected to add 100,000 new residents over the next 25 years. To accommodate this growth, we need to make strategic investments in our road, bridge, and transit systems. I urge legislators to pass a comprehensive long-term transportation funding solution this year to ensure we have the resources necessary for critical transportation investments, like the Red Rock and Gateway Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit projects.”

Karla Bigham, Washington County Commissioner

“Olmsted County has 1,695 highway miles and 337 bridges, and as our system gets older, the cost to fix the problems will only become more expensive. That's why Minnesota needs an increase in dedicated revenue to address these concerns. We’ve done our part by approving a wheelage tax and a local-option sales tax, both of which will pay for transit and transportation projects. I urge legislators to address Minnesota’s long-term transportation needs by providing a sustainable source of new revenue.”

Ken Brown, Olmstead County Commissioner

"For the past few years the taxpayers of Minnesota have been told repeatedly 'This is the year for transportation.' Unfortunately, this has been followed by 'Next year will

be better for a transportation bill.' Sadly, it appears that the 2016 legislative session is moving along the same path. Doing nothing not only delays much needed projects; it also increases the cost of road and bridge repairs. What could be a simple pavement overlay on a rural two-lane road today will need to be a full pavement reconstruction in five years because of the degree of deterioration. This means a \$120,000 per mile repair will become a \$300,000 per mile repair. If you assume inflation at 2% per year that repair in 5 years will cost over \$330,000. This is a loss of over \$200,000 PER MILE of road.

"The Stearns County road and bridge system consists of about 970 miles of roadways and 220 bridges. We've approved a wheelage tax to help pay for badly needed road projects. Unfortunately, this will not be enough to address all of our needs. I ask the state legislature to pass a transportation bill that provides additional funding. The bill should be comprehensive, balanced, sustainable, and dedicated to ensure adequate resources for county roads and bridges across the state."

DeWayne Mareck, Stearns County Commissioner

"The future growth and prosperity of east metro communities is directly linked to meaningful investments in transportation. We can't settle for a statewide transportation plan that ignores critical projects like the Red Rock Corridor and Gateway Gold Line bus rapid transit projects. Major employers in the east metro, including 3M and Ecolab, have made the case for increased investment in transportation. We need a long-term transportation funding solution that includes new resources for roads, bridges, and transit."

Lisa Weik, Washington County Commissioner

Growing Chorus of Consensus

These 17 additional county leaders join a growing chorus of Minnesotans and local leaders calling for new, dedicated, and sustainable funding to address Minnesota's critical transportation funding needs. For months, Minnesotans and local leaders across the state have been speaking up – in meetings, newspapers, and letters – to call on their elected officials to represent their interests, and get a transportation plan done this session with new, dedicated, sustainable funding. This includes the release yesterday morning of [a letter from 216 county officials](#) across Minnesota calling for a long-term transportation funding solution for roads, bridges, and transit this session.

"To address these needs, the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) supports new revenue for transportation. Specifically, we are in favor of a comprehensive transportation financing package that provides funding for roads, bridges, and transit services. It should also be balanced among regions of the state and modes of transportation. We believe the solution should be sustainable with on-going funding that is dedicated – constitutionally for roads and bridges and statutorily for transit.

"It's important to be clear that we simply cannot address our transportation needs piece-by-piece or region-by-region any longer. We acknowledge that counties throughout our state have specific needs relating to roads, bridges, and transit. The only realistic opportunity to fulfill all of our transportation obligations statewide is to pass a comprehensive, balanced, sustainable, and dedicated funding package. We no

longer can rely on a “band aid” approach to the maintenance of our roads, bridges, and transit systems.”

216 County Officials across Minnesota

“We can’t afford piecemeal funding anymore because the longer we wait to fix our roads and bridges, the more expensive it gets. We need an all-of-the-above solution. The plan proposed by the governor provides a good starting place for negotiations. It would cost the typical Minnesotan less than \$2 a week, while providing enough money to fix 2,000 miles of state highway, 330 state highway bridges and thousands of miles of local roads. It also would invest an additional \$1.6 billion in the state’s Corridors of Commerce program, which pays for adding new lanes on highways such as Interstate 94 and U.S. Highway 14.”

*Michael Potter, Wright County Commissioner
and Ken Brown, Olmsted County Commissioner*

“As mayors of Minnesota cities, we live and breathe local infrastructure challenges. All of us have heard our constituents lament about pockmarked local street surfaces, transit systems that provide inadequate service, and roads and bridges that are posted and can’t be used for hauling heavy loads of commodities. We share their frustration...Any transportation bill passed by the Legislature must include a sustainable funding source dedicated to city streets...Existing funding mechanisms for city street maintenance and reconstruction are inadequate, and the shortfall is resulting in increased property tax burdens for residents and businesses.”

Minnesota Mayors Association

“Our transportation infrastructure is the lifeblood of jobs, growth and economic prosperity for Central Minnesota and our state. We cannot continue down the road of political paralysis and status quo funding levels. The opportunity cost of doing nothing is just too high.”

*Scott Mareck, Senior Transportation Planner at WSB & Associates
and Vice President of the Minnesota Transportation Alliance*

“We urge legislators to think about residents and businesses throughout the state and pass substantial, comprehensive, long-term funding for all modes of transportation. While transportation has been touted as a top priority, and both the House and Senate are in general agreement about the size of the problem, the gulf between funding approaches has resulted in little action: the House relying on general fund revenues, and the Senate relying heavily on increased transportation taxes (gas tax, metro sales tax). A solution to these differing views is essential, because any further delays in addressing Minnesota’s transportation needs will only hold us back and raise the price tag of urgent projects in our communities and across the state.”

*Suburban Minnesota Mayors:
James Hovland, Edina; Elizabeth Kautz, Burnsville; Mike Maguire, Eagan;*

*Sandy Martin, Shoreview; Terry Schneider, Minnetonka; Shep Harris, Golden Valley;
Nora Slawik, Maplewood; Molly Cummings, Hopkins; Jo Emerson, White Bear Lake;
Denny Laufenburger, Chanhassen; Nancy Tyra-Lukens, Eden Prairie;
Bill Mars, Shakopee; George Tourville, Inver Grove Heights, and Janet Williams, Savage*

“Without better transportation, it will be harder for our communities to attract more projects, like the new Wal-Mart Distribution Center in Mankato, or for our businesses to secure competitive trucking rates as they ship products to customers around the country. The human costs of inaction are worse. We’ve seen accidents exacerbated by Highway 14’s two-lane set-up. Since 2001, our communities have endured 59 fatalities and 47 serious injuries on Highway 14. We can’t allow it and other roadways across southern Minnesota to remain unsafe. But if the last several decades have been any guide, a piecemeal approach where six or seven miles are completed at a time won’t work. We need a long-term, comprehensive transportation funding solution. One-time money and short-term borrowing simply won’t allow us to complete Highway 14 and other critical transportation projects across southern Minnesota.”

*Jack Kolars, Nicollet County Commissioner,
and Vance Stuehrenberg, Blue Earth County Commissioner*

“The current Republican plan to use shifts and general fund money to pay for critical long-term transportation needs is disappointing and falls short. At a recent regional meeting of the Association of Minnesota Counties, County Commissioners said it's time to raise the gas tax to fix the state's crumbling roads and bridges. I agree. Legislators should support Gov. Dayton's plan that would provide funding to fix more than 2,000 miles of state highways and thousands of miles of local roads across Minnesota over the next decade—all for the cost of a cup of coffee a week.”

Rita Albrecht, Mayor of Bemidji

“The greater St. Cloud area is an economic hub for our state. As we seek to invite more economic activity and look for job growth, we must have high-quality transportation infrastructure to help facilitate commerce. An integrated network of safe and accessible roads, bridges and transit ways is a key ingredient to bring more jobs to the St. Cloud area. We know that significant transportation needs exist around the state. For all those needs to be met, we need the Legislature to pass a statewide approach to transportation funding that’s comprehensive, balanced among regions and modes of transportation, financially sustainable, and dedicated.”

*Steve Notch, Stearns County Commissioner,
and Jake Bauerly, Benton County Commissioner*

“Since the 2015 legislative session adjourned, the price of fuel has fluctuated more than 50 cents per gallon. If the legislators would have taken a portion of the 50-cent per gallon increase and applied it toward transportation funding, we would have been able to meet a portion of our demands... Without new revenue that has to be spent on roads and bridges, completing major highway corridors simply won't

happen...Legislators need to act during the current session and show some real results in the form of better and safer roads and bridges.”

Michael Sheehan, Director of Olmsted County Public Works

"The counties have already made difficult political decisions. They've made the choice to tax their own residents in order to subsidize what is not coming from the state to take care of bridges, roads and our economy.”

Ken Brown, Olmsted County Commissioner

"We just need [a gas tax increase]. And I'm asking you, Mr. State Representative, to pass the word to your friends.”

Jack Kolars, Nicollet County Commissioner

"Stop the partisan fighting and let's just get out and get this done. We know it's got to be constitutionally dedicated because if not, next year when we're in the hole, transportation (funding) is going to get cut off because children, elderly — that's all going to be first. And then our roads are really going to take a beating.”

Vance Stuehrenberg, Blue Earth County Commissioner

“If no additional transportation funding is passed this year, legislators will say they ‘saved’ Minnesotans from paying more in fees. But that’s simply not true. As has happened in the past, a shortfall in statewide dollars will force counties, cities and towns to raise local property and sales taxes, and issue bonds to repair and expand local roads. People will pay no matter what, but wealthier parts of the state where taxes are higher will end up with better transportation options.”

*Vance Stuehrenberg, Blue Earth County Commissioner,
and Jim McDonough, Ramsey County Commissioner*

“In order to address our needs, we need a funding solution from the Legislature that will help us keep our roadways safe for the public, provide durable infrastructure for Minnesota’s harsh winter and facilitate commerce so that our network of roads invites economic activity and job growth.”

Chris Shoff, Freeborn County Commissioner

“In the past, when we’ve succeeded, we’ve done so by working together across the state. That’s what we need to do again this year. We acknowledge that all communities in Minnesota have unique needs relating to roads, bridges and transit (buses and trains). By uniting together as counties and urging the Legislature to pass a sustainable package, we can rebuild our transportation infrastructure so no community is left behind.”

Peter McLaughlin, Hennepin County Commissioner

“Transportation has long been underfunded and our roads, highways and bridges are deteriorating faster than they can be repaired or replaced. The ability of our businesses and farmers to safely and efficiently transport their products to market is fundamental to their making a profit and thereby sustaining our communities. Increased spending on transportation could result in more jobs in Stevens County...or at the least retaining the jobs that we have.”

Michael Haynes, Stevens County Economic Improvement Commission

"I've heard that the gas tax is nothing but a band-aid. And I agree. But if you don't put a band-aid on, you're going to bleed out. And that's what's going to happen until the state Legislature can figure out a mileage tax or something else that we can really put our feet into."

Vance Stuehrenberg, Blue Earth County Commissioner

Nationwide, Republican Leaders Agree

This is not a partisan issue – Minnesota county commissioners, mayors, and local leaders from across Minnesota are following the lead of 18 states (and Washington D.C.) that [have passed gas tax increases to help resolve transportation funding deficits](#), similar to Minnesota’s transportation crisis. More than half of those gas tax increases were passed or signed into law by Republicans, including in Idaho, Iowa, Georgia, Michigan, Nebraska, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. Here is what those Republicans are saying, in their own words.

INDIANA: Republican-Controlled State House

Just last month, the Republican-controlled Indiana House of Representatives passed a roads plan that included 4-cent gas tax increase. The bill passed overwhelmingly 61-36 and pays for road maintenance by increasing the gas tax four cents a gallon and shifting all sales taxes on fuel to roads. Republican State Representative Matt Lehman summed up the position of his caucus, saying:

“Indiana’s the crossroads of America. Our economy is growing in Indiana and our infrastructure to move those products is crumbling. It is time for us to lead and get our roads back in shape.”

Republican State Representative Matt Lehman

IOWA: Republican Governor and Republican-Controlled State House

In 2015, the Republican-controlled Iowa House of Representatives and Democratic-controlled Iowa Senate approved a 10-cent gas tax increase, which was signed into law by Republican Governor Terry Branstad. The process in Iowa took just two weeks. Republican Governor Branstad celebrated his state’s bipartisan commitment to solving its transportation challenges, saying:

"This is a great example, on a difficult and controversial issue, of the kind of bipartisan cooperation that really makes Iowa stand out as a state where we work together and we get things done on behalf of the citizens of our state. This is important for economic development. This is important for our farmers to be able to

get their crops to market. I know that many people have been waiting a long time for this."

Republican Governor Terry Branstad

UTAH: Republican-Controlled Legislature

In 2015, the Republican-controlled Utah Legislature passed a 5-cent gas tax increase. The act was signed into law by Republican Governor Gary Herbert. Republican Governor Herbert said a gas tax increase was a necessary step to address that state's transportation shortfall:

"A strong transportation infrastructure has played a critical role in our economic growth and it will continue to do so, thanks to this bill. This session we took the necessary steps to address the discrepancy between the funds we have set aside for transportation and the funds we will need to support our growing population and keep commerce flowing through our state for decades to come."

Republican Governor Gary Herbert

SOUTH DAKOTA: Republican Governor and Republican-Controlled Legislature

In 2015, the Republican-controlled South Dakota Legislature passed a 6-cent gas tax increase. It was signed into law by Republican Governor Dennis Daugaard, who emphasized the need for a gas tax increase in his 2015 State of the State Address:

"We cannot address South Dakota's highway funding needs by waiting for the federal government to act. Our ongoing funding falls far short of the level needed. Remember, our goal is to have 80 percent of our pavements in excellent or good condition at any given time.... I also propose that we increase the motor fuel tax by \$.02 cents this year and by an additional \$.02 cents each year going forward."

"A major reason that road funding is insufficient today is because the gas tax does not inflate over time. If we begin to make a small adjustment each year, we can keep up with increasing construction costs and maintain the most efficient pavement condition, without putting future legislatures in a bad position in another ten or fifteen years."

Republican Governor Dennis Daugaard

GEORGIA: Republican Governor and Republican-Controlled Legislature

In 2015, the Republican-controlled Georgia Legislature passed a 6-cent gas tax increase. It was signed into law by Republican Governor Nathan Deal, who said the investment reflected the state's modern-day population and current infrastructure usage:

"Each day, Georgians set out in the pursuit of a brighter future, and it is our roads and bridges that bear the weight of our success... We've reached the point where we can no longer keep up with the growing infrastructure demand that encourages job creation, maintains our businesses' bottom lines and takes us home to our families. This investment reflects our modern-day population and current infrastructure usage."

Republican Governor Nathan Deal

MICHIGAN: Republican Governor and Republican-Controlled Legislature

In 2015, the Republican-controlled Michigan Legislature passed a 7.3-cent gas tax increase. It was signed into law by Republican Governor Rick Snyder, who said the investment was good for the state's economy and addressing the state's growing infrastructure problems:

"[Raising the gas tax is] good for our economy, strengthening the network of local, state and federal roads that is vital for all of our job-creators This is the largest investment in Michigan roads and bridges in more than half a century, making them safer for Michiganders long into the future. I commend my partners in the Legislature for their resolve and their willingness to compromise. These are difficult decisions. If left unaddressed, our infrastructure problems would have grown more expensive to fix, there would have been greater damage to our vehicles and, more importantly, more drivers left to face unsafe conditions."

Republican Governor Rick Snyder

TENNESSEE: Republican Governor Bill Haslam

In Tennessee, Republican Governor Bill Haslam personally lobbied the State Legislature to increase the gas tax in 2016. According to Nashville Public Radio, Republican Governor Haslam met privately with representatives to try one more time to make the case. Haslam said the state was falling behind on road projects, stating:

"We cannot keep doing what we're doing now... We know we have a \$6 billion backlog in road needs. It's a question of: How quickly do we want to address that as a state?"

Republican Governor Bill Haslam