



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Dear local government leaders:

Thank you for your role in organizing the September 29th *Turnout for Transportation*. These unprecedented meetings will serve to deliver the strong message that Wisconsin is in crisis when it comes to our transportation infrastructure.

The transportation budget drafted at the direction of Governor Walker is one of the worst transportation budgets submitted in the history of Wisconsin. This budget falls far short of what our roads need for basic maintenance, depends heavily on borrowing, and will increase costs for taxpayers. Commuters will likely need to spend more time and money on the road due to congestion and delays, and motorists will spend more money repairing damage to their vehicles caused by inferior road conditions. Make no mistake, this budget will cost taxpayers much, much more to drive in Wisconsin and will also increase future costs down the road.

As you likely know, this budget shifts the burden of supporting our transportation infrastructure to the local level, and at a much higher markup. In Wausau, for example, vehicle owners will have to pay a \$25 wheel tax to Marathon County and, pending a November referendum, they will likely need to pay a \$20 wheel tax to the city. The decision to impose these additional taxes was forced upon local government leaders with no other choice in the face of inaction by the governor and legislative Republicans. These particular wheel taxes will result in a vehicle owner in Wausau writing a registration check that is over 50% higher than the last check they wrote.

As our roads rank the third worst in the nation, the governor has pledged to continue the cycle of infrastructure deterioration with his 2017-19 budget proposal. "Don't worry," Gov. Walker says, "the state's backbone highways will be in fair or better condition." However, the *backbone* system he references consists of only 1,588 miles of the 115,000 total miles of roadway in Wisconsin. Governor Walker is wrong to use that talking point of 1.4% of our road system being in fair or better condition. Simply ignoring the remaining 98.6% of our roads when they are so critical to our agriculture, tourism, manufacturing and forestry industries is a disservice to Wisconsin residents, farmers, and business owners.

Fixing the problems in transportation funding is not rocket science. The Governor's 2012 blue-ribbon *Wisconsin Commission on Transportation Finance and Policy* thoroughly examined the transportation challenges facing Wisconsin. They heard sobering forecasts about infrastructure conditions and overwhelmingly approved a final package of reasonable options that would sustainably address the transportation needs that most people believe to be a core function of state government. Secretary Gottlieb also outlined several meaningful solutions. Unfortunately for the people of Wisconsin, Governor Walker chose to ignore these recommendations, and legislative Republicans refused to even hold a public hearing to discuss the findings of the blue-ribbon commission's report.

We are not being fiscally responsible if we follow the governor's lead. As Wisconsin Democratic legislators, we oppose pushing local governments to stretch their razor-thin budgets even thinner and, even worse, force their local officials and residents to backfill the governor's and legislative Republicans' decision to ignore the state's deteriorating transportation infrastructure. Instead, we ask that you join our call for Governor Walker and legislative Republicans to pay more attention to the true needs of Wisconsin's transportation system and less attention to the out-of-state special interest groups that seem to be the real audience of the governor's politically charged transportation budget.

Sincerely,



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47th Assembly District

CC: Craig Thompson, TDA Wisconsin Executive Director