

# The Wisconsin County Highway Association's WCHA Informer

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## Transportation News

During consideration of the Senate Minibus Appropriations bill, two transportation-related amendments that NACo took an active role in opposing were defeated. Senator Coburn's (R-Okla.) amendment to eliminate all funding for the Small Community Air Service Development Program lost 57-41 and Senator Paul's (R-Ky.) amendment cutting Transportation Enhancement funding lost 60-38. The Senate-passed transportation funding levels generally provide a higher level of funding than its House counterpart. The Senate bill provides \$41.1 billion for highway funding, the same as current year funding, and \$1.9 billion in emergency relief highway funding. Transit funding is \$10.6 billion, a \$585 million increase over FY2011. The Airport Improvement Program is funded at the current level of \$3.515 billion while Essential Air Service is reduced by \$6.7 million to \$193 million.

Amtrak operating assistance is set at \$544 million, an \$18 million cut and the Amtrak capital program is funded at \$937 million, a \$15 million increase. High-speed rail is funded at \$100 million and the TIGER grant program is provided with \$550 million. In contrast, the House bill makes some serious cuts to transportation spending. The federal highway program is cut from \$41 billion to \$27.7 billion. Transit spending goes down from \$10.29 billion to \$7.04 billion, the Airport Improvement Program is reduced from \$3.515 billion to \$3.335 billion and Essential Air Service is cut from \$200 billion to \$150 billion. There is no funding for high-speed rail, Amtrak operating subsidies are cut by 60 percent and funding for TIGER grants are eliminated.

[Continued...](#)

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### **The Senate has named the following conferees to H.R. 2112:**

Senator Herb Kohl (D-Wis.)  
Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa)  
Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.)  
Senator Mark Pryor (D-Ark.)  
Senator Bill Nelson (D-Neb.)  
Senator John Hoeven (R-N.D.)  
Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-Texas)  
Senator Richard Shelby (R-Ala.)  
Senator Tom Cochran (R-Miss.)  
Senator Roy Blunt (R-Mo.)

### **The House has named the following conferees:**

Rep. C.W. Bill Young (R-Fla.)  
Rep. Jerry Lewis (R-Calif.)  
Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.)  
Rep. Jack Kingston (R-Ga.)  
Rep. Tom Latham (R-Iowa)  
Rep. Robert Aderholt (R-Ala.)  
Rep. Joe Ann Emerson (R-Mo.)  
Rep. John Culberson (R-Texas)  
Rep. John Carter (R-Texas)  
Rep. Jo Bonner (R-Ala.)  
Rep. Steven LaTourette (R-Ohio)  
Rep. Norm Dicks (D-Wash.)  
Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.)  
Rep. John Olver (D-Mass.)  
Rep. Ed Pastor (D-Ariz.)  
Rep. David Price (D-N.C.)  
Rep. Sam Farr (D-Calif.)  
Rep. Chaka Fattah (D-Pa.)  
Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.)

## More revenue options needed

# Gas tax alone short of covering roads

[See the recent article below](#)

By Larry Sandler of the Journal Sentinel

The state gas tax would have to rise 50 cents - a 152% increase, to nearly 83 cents a gallon - to cover road costs that are now being paid through property taxes or other general [tax revenue](#), a new study by [University of Wisconsin-Madison](#) researchers say.

The [study](#), commissioned by the environmental group 1,000 Friends of Wisconsin, challenges some common claims about how transportation is funded in this state.

Highway advocates typically contend roads pay for themselves, through gas taxes and user fees. But that's only true of state-owned highways, which account for just 10% of all Wisconsin roads, the study says.

When local roads are included, property taxes and other general taxes cover 41% to 55% of road costs, says the study, "Who Pays for Roads in Wisconsin?" For local roads alone, property taxes paid 83% of costs, or \$9.9 billion, over the five-year period that ended June 30, 2008, found the study, which is being released this week.

That comes out to 20% of the average property tax bill, said Steve Hiniker, executive director of 1,000 Friends of Wisconsin. If roads were fully funded by gas taxes and vehicle fees, local governments could afford to cut property taxes and increase services, instead of raising taxes and cutting services, the environmental group said.

"Taxpayers cover costs that should be borne by road users," says the study by UW-Madison's [State Smart Transportation Initiative](#). By forcing local officials to choose between roads and other services, the study says, "Road subsidies push up tax rates, squeeze government services and skew the market for transportation."

Opponents of public transit often use that kind of language, describing tax support for transit as a "subsidy" and arguing bus and train riders should pay all costs. But in the five-year period studied, state aid to transit systems accounted for less than 6% of the \$10.2 billion that the state spent on transportation, the study found.

And while drivers pay just 17% of the cost of local roads, according to the study, bus riders paid almost 29% of transit costs in 2010, the Wisconsin Urban and Rural Transit Association says.

Roads take an average of \$779 a year from each Wisconsin household in property taxes and other general taxes, while gas tax support for public transit amounts to \$50 a year for each Wisconsin household, the study found.

Local officials see the study as support for their efforts to win a larger share of state transportation dollars. In the 2011-'13 state budget, Republican Gov. Scott Walker and the GOP-led Legislature increased spending on major highways while cutting aid to local roads and public transit.

Curt Witynski, assistant director of the League of Wisconsin Municipalities, said his group wants the state to pay 24% of local road costs, up from the 17% calculated by the study, and 42% of public transit costs. In 2010, before the aid cuts, the state paid 36% of transit costs, according to the transit association.

Environmentalists have joined forces with local officials to promote the "fix-it-first" approach to existing roads while opposing highway expansion.

## ROAD BUILDERS SEEK MORE TRANSPORTATION REVENUE

Pat Goss, executive director of the Wisconsin Transportation Builders Association, said road builders believe both state highways and local transportation should have more revenue. He said the environmentalists "want to rob from Peter to pay Paul, when the needs of both are very legitimate."

Goss said his group believes local governments should have the option of supporting transit systems through sales taxes, if approved in a referendum. He noted Milwaukee also has imposed a local vehicle fee, or "wheel tax," to help pay for city streets.

Road builders also are pushing to amend the state constitution to prohibit money from being diverted from the state's transportation fund to pay for expenses unrelated to transportation. Former Democratic Gov. Jim Doyle and lawmakers of both parties moved \$1.4 billion from the transportation fund to the general fund and replaced only three-quarters of the money with borrowing.

Highway backers characterized those moves as a raid that depleted the transportation fund. But, excluding the part replaced with borrowing, such diversions amounted to \$34 a year per household, or 4% of transportation spending, in the five years examined, the study found.

"This diversion is a distraction, really," said Eric Sundquist, managing director of the UW-Madison transportation think tank.

The environmental group released its study just a week after the conservative Wisconsin Policy Research Institute issued the latest in a series of studies [advocating tolls](#) as a way to pay for rebuilding the state's aging interstate highways.

Both studies examine how users should pay for roads at a time when gas tax revenue is declining. But while the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute study focuses on interstates, the 1,000 Friends of Wisconsin study includes all roads, big and small.

Goss said Wisconsin drivers want safe and efficient highways, and the state has to figure out how to pay for them. But Hiniker said drivers spend more time on local roads that they want to be properly maintained.

"When spring comes, people are going to be furious about all the potholes," Hiniker said.

## WPRI Report Says Tolling Can Pay For Interstate Reconstruction

A [report](#) released last week by the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute (WPRI) calls for financing the reconstruction of Wisconsin's interstate system through the use of open road tolling. The report written by Robert Poole of the Reason Foundation estimates the cost of rebuilding our interstate system over the next 30 years to be \$26.2 billion.

Recognizing the decreasing purchasing power of the gas tax, Poole recommends placing tolls on areas of the interstate once they have been rebuilt. This "value-added tolling" would finance the entire cost of rebuilding the interstate system in the rural parts of Wisconsin but would cover 71% of the cost of urban freeways – if all lanes are subject to tolling. If Wisconsin were to only toll new capacity in urban areas, the tolls would only cover 17% of the cost.

In order for Wisconsin to even contemplate such an approach, the federal government would have to lift the current ban on tolling interstates that were constructed with federal funding. Proponents of lifting the ban argue that while the federal money was used to build these roads, we are now facing the reconstruction and modernization of the fifty-year-old system and need to find a way to pay for it.

## Members Named to Transportation Finance and Policy Commission

The members of the Transportation Finance and Policy Commission have been named. The commission was created in the 2011-13 biennial budget and is charged with examining issues related to the future of transportation finance and policy in the state.

The first meeting of the commission will be October 25th in Madison.

The ten voting members were appointed by the Governor (6), Senate Majority Leader (1), Senate Minority Leader (1), Assembly Speaker (1) and Assembly Minority Leader (1). Wisconsin Department of Transportation Secretary Mark Gottlieb will serve as a non-voting member.

Commission members include:

- Tripp Ahern, CEO of J.F. Ahern Co.
- Tom Carlsen, former Wisconsin Department of Transportation Secretary
- Barbara Fleisner, Centergy Executive Director
- Robb Kahl, Construction Business Group Executive Director and former Mayor of Monona
- Craig Thompson, TDA Executive Director
- Tom Vandenberg, General Counsel at Schneider National
- Bob Cook, Vice President of Government Relations at HNTB
- Dave Cieslewicz, former Mayor of Madison
- Martin Hanson, Vice President at Ayres Associates
- John Antaramian, former Mayor of Kenosha
- The commission must deliver a report to the Governor and legislative leadership by March 1, 2013.

**NOTE TO ALL:  
WISDOT LRIP  
POLICY INFORMATION UPDATE**

**RE: Allowing the use of “Warm mix” asphalt purchase for the upcoming  
2012-2013 LRIP Program**

**Note that WisDOT has determined that they will allow the use of “Warm Mix”  
under the “Hot Mix” purchase provisions.**

**Please be aware of this change in policy as you develop your LRIP  
applications, and advise your local municipalities on the development of their  
LRIP applications.**

**If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.**

**Dan**

## Ayres Associates Founder Recognized:



### *Lifetime Achievement Award*

The Daily Reporter has announced it will present its 2011 Newsmakers of the Year Lifetime Achievement Award to Owen Ayres, founder of Ayres Associates. The Milwaukee-based construction and engineering publication will present the award October 27 in Pewaukee.

Ayres started the engineering and architectural firm in 1959 in Eau Claire, and he continues to mentor the firm's young engineers, architects, and scientists today. The firm has grown to 13 offices in seven states. Ayres Associates provides services in transportation, civil, structural, water resources, levee, and river engineering; energy corridors; architecture; environmental science; surveying; grant and planning services; geospatial services; and GIS.

The company bears the cultural imprint of integrity, innovation, and employee ownership that Ayres instituted from the beginning.

And, at age 86, he is still going strong, arriving at the office around 7:30 a.m. each workday. He is known for going out of his way to get to know the younger employees and taking them out for coffee or lunch, encouraging their efforts to design a better future for Ayres Associates and for the communities where it does business.

Ayres is also known for the humility he expresses regarding his success in business. From his military service to the many twists and turns he navigated in his engineering career, Ayres often chalks it up to good luck.

An Eau Claire native, Ayres passed the Air Force examinations while he was in high school and was mistakenly sent to flight schools and then to Turner Field in Albany, Georgia, before he even had the chance to graduate from high school. He was sent to England as a B24 bomber pilot during World War II and flew his first mission just after he turned 19. He was discharged in 1945, having earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster for his 25 air missions over Germany and enemy-occupied territories in World War II.

Ayres, whose father was an engineer, received a mining engineering degree in 1951 from the University of Missouri in Rolla. He also attended the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and later received his Wisconsin registration as a structural engineer. Decades later he was awarded the high school diploma that wartime had prevented him from receiving.

Ayres worked as a civil engineer for Allis Chalmers in Milwaukee after receiving his degree. After being passed over for an Allis Chalmers job in Boston, Ayres joined Garnock Engineering in Eau Claire in 1957. Two years later Ayres and Stanley Loken bought out Garnock when he retired. In 1962 the firm was renamed Owen Ayres & Associates, and Ayres began paving his own path to success.

Frustrated by high turnover among talented engineers, Ayres was among the first to implement an employee stock ownership program, which he says made all the difference in building his firm. Ayres credits much of the success of his company to the people he hired.

In 1981, Ayres left the firm to serve as secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation under Governor Lee Dreyfus. He held that position for two years and later returned to the firm. His other experiences in the public sector included service on the Eau Claire City Council and a stint as president of the Eau Claire Industrial Development Council.

A favorite professor of Ayres advised him that to live a good life, he needed to get involved in the community. Ayres was listening.

Ayres and his wife, Janice, were honored in 2001 by the Chippewa Valley Fund Raising Professionals for their philanthropy. They have given financial support, time, and talent to Luther Hospital, the Chippewa Valley Council of Boys Scouts, the United Way, the YMCA, Camp Manitou, the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, the Eau Claire Area Foundation, and the Chippewa Valley Museum. Ayres won the Silver Beaver Award from the Boy Scouts of America, and he was inducted into the Wisconsin Business Hall of Fame by Junior Achievement of Wisconsin in 2002. His JA involvement has ranged from volunteering in classrooms to raising money for the organization. Ayres was inducted into the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce Business Hall of Fame in 2009.

For years after returning to the firm following his WisDOT secretary stint, Ayres donated most of his salary to one of his favorite organizations, the Eau Claire YMCA.

He has served as chairman and member of the Board of Directors of the United Way of Greater Eau Claire, chairman and board member of the Chippewa Valley Council of Boy Scouts, and president and board member of the Eau Claire Industrial Development Corporation. He served as a board member of First Wisconsin National Bank Eau Claire and as chairman and board member of Luther Hospital. Other boards on which he has served include Midelfort Clinic, Regis High School Foundation, Stout University Foundation, the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Foundation, and Viterbo College in La Crosse. He was president and board member of the Wisconsin Examining Board of Architects, Professional Engineers, Designers, and Land Surveyors.



## **Relieving Rush Hour Congestion – What Can Counties Do?**

**Thursday, November 10, 2011  
from 2:00 to 3:15 p.m. EDT**

Demand for travel by Americans continues to grow as the population increases, particularly in metropolitan areas. Construction of new road capacity to accommodate this growth in travel has not kept pace. This challenge is especially acute during rush hour periods, and it can be costly due to loss in worker productivity. Join this webinar to hear about tools and resources (including Intelligent Transportation Systems) that counties can use to reduce the impacts of congestion, especially during rush hour.

### **Speakers:**

**David Schrank**, Texas Transportation Institute and co-author of Urban Mobility Report, and

**Michael L. Pack**, Director, CATT Laboratory, and

**Mark Keil**, Chief Information Officer, City of Chattanooga, TN.

To register, please click [here](#).

Contact: [James Davenport](#) or 202-661-8807

# WCHA Winter Road School 2012

January 16, 17, 18, 2012

All new Road school Site:

**The “New” Chula Vista Resort and Conference Center**

Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin



Great new Location.

Great new Format.

Great New Layout.

Do not miss this Opportunity!!!

Registration Materials and Road School Information on the WCHA Website

[www.wcha.net](http://www.wcha.net)

WCHA

All

It is with much regret and a sincere feeling of loss that I send you this notice:

Our talented colleague in transportation and dear friend to many of us, Tom Walker, WTBA passed away.

The Transportation Community in Wisconsin has lost a great leader and a tremendous transportation policy intellect.

Tom's influence is evident throughout Transportation in Wisconsin and the Nation.

The WCHA sends our greatest condolences to Tom's family.

And a sincere thank you for all that Tom has done for Wisconsin.

The Transportation Community will miss him...As will I.

Dan

# WCHA Statewide Commissioners Meeting

## Review of the WCHA President's Task Force final report (please see the report on the WCHA website)

