



Our View — Road funding must get ‘creative’

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— The road funding situation in Minnesota just becomes more frustrating with every report. Monday, Minnesota Department of Transportation unveiled its 20-year plan for state road repair and it's not pretty. Despite approval of a \$6.6 billion road financing plan in 2008, the state will be \$50 billion short in the next 20 years.

MnDOT estimated road repair and construction needs in the next 20 years will be \$65 billion, but there will be only \$15 billion to pay for those needs. As a result, Minnesotans will continue to drive on the most dangerous highways, like Highway 14, for years to come. The number of miles of roads in “poor” condition will nearly triple from the current 600 miles to 1,600 miles.

Transportation Commissioner Tom Sorel notes that the increased gas tax will only bring in an extra \$30 million per year. “That did not take care of all of our issues and problems that we have,” Sorel told the Associated Press.

Hardly. Not even close.

Sorel offers little in comfort, but notes bridges will at least be safe. In fact, a large share of the transportation funding approved in 2008 went to shore up bridges. Several have been closed.

Safe roadways are another matter. Highway 14 between North Mankato and New Ulm has arguably the worse safety record in the state with a crash rate three times the average.

Sorel points to being “more creative” with road funding. Be ready for toll roads owned by investors, and new taxes on how many miles one drives versus tax by the gallon. We're sure those who bought economy cars will be happy about that.

Minnesota's transportation funding system is not only frustrating, but enough to make taxpayers angry.

We're paying more and getting less, mostly due to the long-time neglect of adequate funding.

The old adage applies. Pay now or pay later. We'll likely be paying a lot more sooner than later because we've waited so long.

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