

It's Time to Invest in Our Transportation System

Written by Janis Ringhand, State Senator Dist 15

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Gov. Walker tells Transportation Secretary not to include any tax or fee increases in his budget request for state highway system improvement. As a result, system is going to continue to deteriorate and highway projects throughout the state will be delayed.

MADISON - Recently, former Republican State Senator and current Waukesha County Executive Paul Farrow wrote that our transportation system is in crisis. I agree with him. Unfortunately, his former Republican colleagues in the State Senate and Governor Walker think the solution is to let our crumbling infrastructure continue to deteriorate while motorist safety suffers and economic development opportunities are lost.

Under the direction of Governor Walker, the Secretary of Transportation was told that his budget request should not include any tax or fee increases. Walker also says that proposed spending on megaprojects in southeast Wisconsin should be minimized. The result of Walker's directive, according to the Secretary, is "that the non-backbone system, which is about 90 percent of the state highway system, is going to continue to deteriorate in condition" and "it would delay highway projects throughout the state."

Wow, what a lack of leadership! I was a mayor and alderperson before getting elected to State Legislature. In local government we identified the problem and then worked out a solution collaboratively. Unfortunately, Governor Walker and my Republican colleagues are putting their strict adherence to a political ideology above what is good for the state and its residents.

Eventually, we will have to fix and upgrade our roads. According to a report in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel when that time comes it will cost taxpayers a lot more money. "Faced with delays and inflation over the past five years, four major state highway projects have accumulated overruns in excess of \$700 million," according to the paper. I shudder to think what Governor Walker and Senate Republicans inaction will cost years down the road.

In the meantime taxpayers will have higher vehicle repair bills because our roads are beat up

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and littered with pot holes. For the average Wisconsin driver a penny increase in the gas tax costs \$4.53 per year. That's a better deal than paying for expensive car repairs.

However, we don't have to go down this road. Transportation shouldn't be a partisan issue. Let's adopt the local government model work together and solve this crisis while simultaneously improving road safety and creating economic opportunities. For Governor Walker and legislative Republicans to do nothing is simply irresponsible.

State Senator Janis Ringhand serves the [15th Senate District](#) near Janesville.