



# STATE SENATOR GARY DAHMS



Proudly Serving the Residents of District 16

E-Newsletter

March 27, 2015

## REPUBLICAN LEADERS UNVEIL 10 YEAR, \$7 BILLION ROAD AND BRIDGE PLAN

On Monday, Senate and House Republicans unveiled their comprehensive, future-oriented proposal for transportation in Minnesota: the **Road and Bridge Act of 2015** (House File 4). Polls show rural Minnesotans oppose increases in the gas tax and sales taxes on wholesale gas. The Republican plan does not raise taxes yet invests \$7 billion more over the next decade to repair and replace lane miles for all roads and many bridges statewide. Our plan focuses on the needs of all Minnesotans including those in Greater Minnesota and in small cities by prioritizing bus services in Greater Minnesota and giving small cities under 5,000 population additional funding.

The Road and Bridge Act of 2015 creates a special fund called the Transportation Stability Fund that collects existing proceeds from dedicated tax revenues and deposits them into accounts for each of their dedicated purposes. There are five accounts that would dedicate a combined \$3.078 billion over ten years:

- ★ Road and Bridge Account – revenue from existing sales tax on auto parts.
- ★ Metro Capital Improvements Account – revenue from existing sales tax on rental vehicles.
- ★ Small Cities Account – revenue from existing rental vehicle tax.
- ★ Greater Minnesota Bus Services Account – revenue from 50% of existing Motor Vehicle Lease sales tax.
- ★ Suburban County Highway Account – revenue from 50% of existing Motor Vehicle Lease sales tax.

In addition to the dedicated funds provided by the Transportation Stability Fund, the Act uses \$1.3 billion in Trunk Highway bonds, \$1.2 billion from realigning Minnesota Department of Transportation resources, \$1.05 billion in General Obligation bonds, and \$228 million in General Funds. The money is spent in the following way:

- ★ \$4.03 billion for state roads.
- ★ \$1.44 billion for county roads.
- ★ \$583 million for municipal roads.
- ★ \$139 million for Greater Minnesota bus services.
- ★ \$60 million for township roads and bridges.
- ★ \$164 million for Metro capital improvements. (Examples include park and rides, bus shelters, etc. Projects must be approved by the legislature.)

By comparison, the Democrat plan increases taxes by \$8.5 billion. It would give Minnesota the fifth highest gas tax in the nation and does nothing to address the long-term funding uncertainties caused by the gas tax, a revenue source that is currently flat and will decline due to EPA standards and more efficient vehicles. Additionally, the Democrat plan does not include funding for small rural cities.



## CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION BILL PRESENTED

On Tuesday, the Senate E-12 Education Budget Division heard [Senate File 1031](#). The bi-partisan bill is authored by Senator Bill Weber (R – Luverne), Senator Gary Dahms (R – Redwood Falls), Senator Lyle Koenen (DFL – Clara City), and Senator LeRoy Stumpf (DFL – Plummer).

This bill provides \$150,000 annually for two years to establish a regional Office for Career and Technical Education to increase the number and variety of high school career and technical education (CTE) programs in Southwest and West Central Minnesota. The bill also provides \$750,000 annually for two years for regional CTE collaboratives that include three or more high schools, at least one business, and at least one post-secondary partner. These CTE programs would target high-demand and high-wage careers that align with the regional labor market needs. Eighteen Southwest and West Central Minnesota counties, over 60 school districts, Southwest Minnesota State University, Minnesota West Community and Technical College, and Ridgewater College stand to benefit from these programs.

The legislation received strong support from several testifiers. Cliff Carmody, Executive Director of the SW/WC Service Cooperative, stressed the need for these programs and pointed out that the bill was based on a pilot program for Southwest and West Central Minnesota. Former State Senator Roger Moe explained why the bill was important, the effect it would have on rural development, the exposure it would provide to high school students of trade and vo-tech aspects, and the ability to fill available jobs in rural Minnesota. Wayne Wormstadt, Windom Public Schools Superintendent, stated the bill provides future possibilities for all schools and benefits students by developing partnerships with school districts, service co-ops, and local businesses.

Tom Mayer from the 3M Company stressed the need for talented people to fulfill jobs that are available in their various career paths. Mayer also gave an interesting statistic: for every job requiring a master's degree, there are four jobs requiring bachelor's degrees and seven jobs requiring two year degrees. Finally, Chris Ellingson from the Schwan Food Company emphasized the lack of available workers in the labor force, especially in key areas where vo-tech training is needed. He elaborated on the problem we will have in the future as baby boomers retire, and we have fewer skilled workers to fill their positions.

We thank all the testifiers for taking time to travel to St. Paul and testify on behalf of this important bill. It was laid over for possible inclusion in a larger Education Finance Bill. Click [here](#) to view or listen to the full hearing.



### THANK YOU FOR VISITING ME THIS WEEK AT THE CAPITOL

#### NOT PICTURED

- ★ Jason Swanson, Walnut Grove



Dawn Richardson, Echo and Britta Babel, New Ulm Healthy Kids Coalition



American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)



Tom Henderson, Director Brown County Social Services



Christine Versaevell, Marshall

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