

Top Story – State Shutdown

[Industry Can't Afford This Fight – Transportation Alliance Update](#) *Finance & Commerce*

The thousands of people employed by private sector companies in the transportation construction industry are bracing for a summer of potentially devastating work stoppage that could occur if state government shuts down on July 1.

How many jobs could be affected? We could see more than 28,000 jobs related to highway and bridge construction lost if projects are halted.

[No Deal Yet on State Budget](#) *Star Tribune*

Edging ever closer to a government shutdown, state leaders met Monday for a fourth straight day of closed-door talks in an effort to solve Minnesota's budget dilemma.

Two hours before talks with DFL Gov. Mark Dayton, the entire Republican legislative leadership team scrambled to the Stillwater Lift Bridge to argue the span must remain open in the event of a shutdown, which could start Friday. They made a plea for the governor to call a special legislative session, even without a budget deal.

[Contractors File Brief in State Shutdown Case](#) *Finance & Commerce*

Alluding to the collapse of the Interstate 35W bridge, construction industry groups are petitioning a court to include projects like replacing a fracture-critical bridge as essential services in the event of a state government shutdown.

If lawmakers and the governor cannot agree on a budget by June 30, a shutdown would result in “massive disruptions to project schedules,” seriously setting back important projects like the new \$130 million Lafayette Bridge, according to a petition filed Tuesday in Ramsey County District Court. At a hearing on Thursday, Ramsey County Chief Judge Kathleen Gearin said she would not rule immediately on essential services claims. She heard arguments from attorneys for Gov. Mark Dayton, Attorney General Lori Swanson and others regarding what services should continue during a shutdown.

[Stillwater Lift Bridge Will Remain Open](#) *St. Paul Pioneer Press*

The Stillwater Lift Bridge could remain open even if a state government shutdown occurs Friday, Minnesota Department of Transportation officials said this morning.

MnDOT is including operation of the lift bridge as a core critical function in its contingency planning efforts, pending a final court ruling.

[Highway Contractors Working Overtime as Shutdown Looms](#) *Finance & Commerce*

Hoping to stay one car length ahead of a feared July 1 state government shutdown, highway construction crews in Elk River are moving into the fast lane on a Highway 169 project.

The bridge resurfacing project was scheduled to wrap up July 4. Instead, with the Minnesota Department of Transportation's blessing, St. Michael-based PCi Roads is striving to finish by June 30 — just in case.

[MnPASS Lanes Won't Be Open In Shutdown](#) *Star Tribune*

The state will have to stop collecting those quarters and sometimes dollars from solo motorists who use the pay-to-drive carpool lanes in the metro area starting Thursday should the state budget impasse lead to a government shutdown, transportation officials said Tuesday.

E-mails were sent to the thousands of motorists whose transponders allow them to pay to drive solo in the high-occupancy lanes of Interstate 394 between downtown Minneapolis and the west metro, and between downtown Minneapolis and the south metro

Solo drivers, even those with transponders, are out of luck during those rush-hour time slots and should expect to see State Patrol enforcement, she said. Single-person vehicles can use the lanes at other times.

National

[US DOT Announces \\$1.6 Billion For Transit Projects](#)

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood today announced \$1.58 billion for 27 transit projects nationwide that will improve public transportation access for millions of Americans while reducing our dependence on foreign oil and curbing air pollution. Twenty-seven transit projects across America are on a path to receive funding under the New Starts program, through which Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides federal support for major capital construction projects such as subways, light rail, streetcars, and bus rapid transit. These projects include: The Central Corridor light rail project will connect Minnesota's two largest cities—Minneapolis and Saint Paul—by light rail for the first time. The FTA recently signed a Full Funding Grant Agreement making a long-term financial commitment to the \$957 million light rail line, which will carry 40,000 riders along this busy 11-mile corridor.

[Toll Roads Targeted For Major Fare Increases](#) *Fox News*

Travelers and commuters feeling the pain at the pump should prepare for another financial hit -- at the tolls.

As the summer travel season gets under way, several states are considering or have already approved steep hikes in the fees drivers pay to cross bridges, highways and tunnels.

The proposal would affect several Baltimore-area roads. But the proposal has really riled residents on the Eastern Shore, where the state plans to jack up the Chesapeake Bay Bridge toll from \$2.50 to \$8 by summer 2013. That bridge is the state's only central route across the bay and links the D.C. and Baltimore regions to the popular summer hangout of Ocean City -- Maryland's more family-friendly version of the Jersey shore.

[White House Considers Big Boost to Fuel Economy](#) *Finance & Commerce*

The Obama administration is telling American automakers that it would like cars and light trucks to average 56.2 miles per gallon by 2025 — a boost to fuel economy that would save consumers money at the pump and help with global warming but drive up the cost of automobiles.

While it is just a starting point, the figure is the first hint of where the government may be headed as it works to set a 2017-2025 fuel economy standard. Last fall, the Transportation Department and the Environmental Protection Agency said they would consider a federal standard somewhere between 47 and 62 mpg.

State

[Time may be running out for a new St. Croix River bridge](#) *Star Tribune*

More than \$360 million in state and federal funding will be diverted to other state transportation projects if Congress doesn't approve the long-debated bridge by the end of September, Gov. Mark Dayton has warned U.S. Rep. Michele Bachmann, R-Minn.

The money -- \$160 million in federal funds and \$203 million in state trunk highway bonding money -- could be used for projects ranging from infrastructure at the proposed Vikings stadium in Arden Hills to upgrading other Minnesota bridges, though such decisions are far off.

[Tracking Cheaters on MnPASS Lanes](#) *Star Tribune*

As Minnesota relies increasingly on toll lanes to relieve highway congestion, drivers and officers are learning to adapt. Catching drivers who game the system has become a full-time job for six troopers patrolling during morning and evening rush hours.

As many as nine of 100 cars using dedicated toll and carpool lanes are violating the rules, risking fines of more than \$100, according to highway surveillance by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). In just four weeks this spring, 664 drivers were pulled over on suspicion of illegal driving in the restricted lanes on 35W and Interstate 394.

[Minnesota Adds 2200 Construction Jobs as Unemployment Rate Rises](#) *Finance & Commerce*

Maybe it was the rain after all. A month after construction job losses were blamed on the weather, Minnesota construction employment bounced back in May, with the sector adding 2,200 jobs on a seasonally adjusted basis.

The state as a whole added just 1,200 jobs in May, the state Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) reported Thursday.

Construction led all sectors in May in jobs growth here. Construction has added jobs in three of the last four months, with April appearing to be a weather-related hiccup. Still, the sector has lost an overall 6,700 jobs since May 2010, even as construction jobs nationwide are up slightly in the same period.

Local/Regional

[Study of I-94 Transit Options Expanded](#) *Star Tribune*

A study taking a broad view of future transit options to unclog chronic congestion along Interstate 94 east of the Twin Cities is getting a little broader.

Washington County, together with Ramsey County and the Metropolitan Council, is sharing the cost of an additional \$100,000 to see whether a managed or MnPASS lane is a feasible option between St. Paul and Hudson, Wis., on I-94. The freeway is one of the most congested traffic routes in the Twin Cities.

[Duluth Port Wins Top Honor](#) *Finance & Commerce*

The Port of Duluth has received top marks from the Railway Industrial Clearance Association, the Duluth Seaway Port Authority recently announced.

Duluth tied for first place, along with the Port of Mobile, Ala., in the association's rankings. Duluth also scored first place in two individual categories, involving facilities and overall service.

[Retail Boomlet Along Highway 65](#) *Finance & Commerce*

Maybe Blaine doesn't have a reputation as a local boomtown.

But several new retail projects are in the pipeline, particularly along the busy corridor of Highway 65. Wal-Mart is set to break ground this fall on a new 148,000-square-foot store on a parcel directly south of a Lowe's store. Not far from there, construction is nearing completion on a new 20,605-square-foot Goodwill retail store.

Minneapolis-based Ryan Cos. US Inc. is also pitching a new retail development at the southwest corner of Highway 65 and 117th Avenue N.E., on a site directly in front of the Lowe's store along Highway 65.

[Hiawatha LRT Spurs Apartment Projects](#) *Finance & Commerce*

Three years ago, an affiliate of Minneapolis-based Klodt Inc. received approval for a small apartment project near the Hiawatha light rail transit (LRT) corridor in south Minneapolis.

Now it's back. Construction began in April on Station 38 Apartments, a \$9.6 million project at 3725 29th Ave. S. It will offer 64 market-rate apartment units and underground parking. The project, near the intersection of Hiawatha Avenue and 38th Street East, is slated to open in April 2012.

"We're seeing a lot of stuff going on out there ... the success of the light rail system is helping to get these projects up and running," said Wes Butler, manager of multifamily housing for the city's Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) department

[Award Winning Road Work in Scott County](#) *Finance & Commerce*

A County Road 21 extension project in Scott County has a little something for everyone — including a special crossing for raccoons, skunks and other critters that might otherwise cross the road at their own risk.

That wildlife underpass is among the eye-opening features of the \$20 million project, which is the recipient of the 2011 Project Achievement Award from the Irving, Texas-based American Concrete Pipe Association.

Mitch Rasmussen, Scott County's engineer, said the association gives only one such award every year.

"It has been a fun project, and it's going to be terrific when it's done," Rasmussen said.

Other States

[Plan Unveiled to Ease Public-Private Partnerships](#) *Chicago Tribune*

Republican [Mark Kirk](#) today unveiled a plan designed to make it easier for governments to lease public transportation assets or enter into partnerships with private companies to build them.

In presenting the details of his--which runs counter to proposed legislation from Sen. [Dick Durbin](#)--said the plan could produce \$100 billion for public-private partnerships on highway, mass transit, aviation and rail projects.

The legislation, called the Lincoln Legacy Infrastructure Development Act, would remove federal restrictions on public-private partnerships while requiring that the proceeds of leases or sales be reinvested in infrastructure, Kirk said.