

## Top Story

### [Senators Outline New Surface Transportation Authorization Plan](#) *Star Tribune*

A bipartisan group of senators said Wednesday they have agreed to the outlines of a long-term transportation spending bill, boosting prospects for ending a stalemate that has kept highway and transit construction programs in limbo since 2008.

The plan calls for spending roughly the same amount of money per year adjusted for inflation as was authorized by the last long-term transportation bill, which was passed in 2005 and expired in 2009.

Still unclear is whether the bipartisan bill will authorize spending for two years or six years. Boxer has pushed for a six-year bill; Baucus has suggested two years may be more doable.

Under the plan, a two-year bill would require Congress to find about \$12 billion in addition to fuel-tax revenues. A six-year bill would require about \$70 billion more.

The plan would also increase funding for a popular Transportation Department loan and loan guarantee program to \$1 billion a year. That would result in an estimated \$30 billion in additional transportation construction spending by generating private capital, Boxer told reporters.

She said she expects to introduce the bill within the next two weeks and win Senate passage before July 4.

## National

### [Four Area Senators Push for St. Croix River Bridge](#) *Star Tribune*

A congressional push to build a four-lane bridge over the St. Croix river leaped forward Friday when the four U.S. senators representing Minnesota and Wisconsin introduced a bill to exempt the \$690 million construction project from the federal law that protects the river.

The key sponsor is Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., who said two months ago that she planned to introduce a bill to allow construction of a bridge. But Sen. Al Franken, D-Minn., who had earlier said he hadn't taken a position in the contentious decades-old dispute, also signed on.

### [Ads Cite 80 Million Jobs at Risk in Transportation Bill Debate](#) *The Hill*

The Transportation Construction Coalition is out with a new ad suggesting as many as 80 million jobs could hinge on Congress passing a new transportation bill this year.

The figure counts not just construction jobs associated with building roads, but employees who would be unable to get to work with roads or public transportation. But it is still an eye-popping number, the TCC said in the advertisement

"That's one big payroll," the ad. "These industries provide a total payroll of \$2.8 trillion and their employees contribute more than \$233 billion annually in state and federal payroll taxes. So it makes sense to get working on passage of the overdue highway/ transit investment bill. A lot of working Americans are depending on it."

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Rep. John Mica (R-Fla.) said this week a first draft of the transportation bill could as early as this week.

### [Private Sector Funding Could Rebuild America's Infrastructure](#) *Wall Street Journal*

The need to rebuild and revitalize America's transportation system is unprecedented. But so is government debt, as well as the lack of public support for higher taxes.

So the question is: Where will the money come from?

Fortunately, there is a straightforward answer: the private sector. Private investors can and will shoulder more responsibility for the transportation systems of the future—and earn respectable returns in the process.

This is not a pipe dream. States and municipalities already are turning to private investors to finance and manage highway, transit, rail and aviation projects. Private investment not only injects much-

needed capital into infrastructure, but it also brings strong incentives to adopt new technologies and to get projects finished quickly and on budget.

#### [MnDOT Receives \\$1 million in Federal Funds for Flood Damage](#) *Star Tribune*

The Minnesota Department of Transportation has received \$1 million in federal funds to continue repairing roads and bridges damaged by floods as a result of the spring snowmelt.

The U.S. Department of Transportation says the structures were damaged by erosion and seepage. DOT Secretary Ray LaHood said Tuesday the money will help restore the structures so people can travel safely.

#### [Mica Proposes to Contract Out Amtrak Acela Line](#) *Star Tribune*

Congress would take away Amtrak's popular Northeast corridor train service and invite private investors to bid for the right to develop high-speed rail under a plan outlined by a key House Republican on Thursday.

The densely populated corridor — which extends from Washington to Boston, including service to New York City and Philadelphia — is the most viable region in the country for truly high-speed trains averaging speeds better than 110 mph, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman John Mica, R-Fla., said.

But Amtrak has failed to provide fast service despite tens of billions of dollars in federal aid, he said while outlining his plan at a hearing.

### **State**

#### [We All Pay the Price for Failing Infrastructure](#) *Finance & Commerce*

**Association:** Minnesota Transportation Alliance

As the state administration and Legislature continue to argue over the path toward a balanced general fund budget, the need for infrastructure investment and job creation seems to be one area where there is bipartisan agreement.

Gov. Mark Dayton and Commissioner Tom Sorel of the Department of Transportation announced the new Better Roads for a Better Minnesota initiative and found a warm welcome from Republican legislative leaders most involved in transportation issues. The initiative will add \$357 million over four years to the funding already programmed for improving pavement quality in the state. Additional revenue is available, thanks to significantly lower than anticipated bids on some major highway and bridge projects as well as some available state and federal highway funds.

#### [Transportation Bill Includes Steep Cuts to Public Transit](#) *Finance & Commerce*

Transportation is slated for some of the steepest cuts in the general fund budget under the finance bill agreed to by Republican conferees in the House and Senate. The proposal slices \$109 million from projected spending - a reduction of nearly 60 percent. The cut to the Met Council is even deeper, with its general fund allocation reduced by 85 percent, to just over \$20 million, in the next biennium.

Behind the immediate tussle over metro transit funding, the state's long-term transportation picture is grim - particularly in the non-general fund portion of the budget. While transportation infrastructure is generally funded through dedicated funds rather than the state's general fund, it faces a massive shortage of cash in the coming years. According to the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the state expects to generate \$15 billion in revenue over the next two decades to pay for transportation infrastructure projects. But the agency estimates that the need for such funding will reach \$65 billion. That shortfall looms despite a 5-cent increase in the gas tax that was passed by the Legislature in 2008.

"When we dawdled around on raising revenue for roads and bridges, we fell very behind," Hornstein said. "Our population is increasing rapidly, and our infrastructure needs are increasing rapidly. We have just not made those investments."

[MnDOT says it would cost \\$131M to upgrade Arden Hills site for stadium](#) *Finance & Commerce*

How much would it *really* cost to prep roads in Arden Hills for a proposed Vikings stadium?

The numbers vary widely depending on who's talking, which doesn't exactly come as a surprise to transportation and construction experts.

Project estimating is "by no means a scientific exercise," noted Tim Worke, director of the Associated General Contractors of Minnesota. "It is more art form and experience that comes into play."

The \$131 million estimate does not include \$20 million in Interstate 35W bridge improvements already programmed for the area. It does include \$45 million for local system and interchange improvements and \$86 million for trunk highway improvements.

[MnDOT Plans Preventive Highway Work](#) *Finance & Commerce*

Stretches of Highways 94 and 10 in western Minnesota aren't in such bad shape - for now, at least - which makes them ideal candidates for an upcoming project.

On Friday, the Minnesota Department of Transportation opened bids for 29 projects, including preventative maintenance work on Interstate 94 near Alexandria and Highway 10 near Detroit Lakes. The relatively modest \$2 million project, known as an "ultra-thin bonded overlay," is designed to prevent a more costly fix down the road.

[I35E MnPASS Proposal Hits Opposition](#) *Star Tribune*

As cash-strapped Minnesota turns to toll lanes to ease traffic congestion, a key project in that strategy is stalled.

A plan to add pay lanes to Interstate 35E in the northeast metro and spend that revenue on transportation elsewhere in the Twin Cities ran afoul of a veteran legislator at the end of the session. "I don't support toll roads in general," said Sen. Ray Vandever, R-Forest Lake, a few miles north of I-35E. "Diverting the tolls to uses other than the road -- maintaining and expanding it -- is even more offensive."

[California Rail Line Construction Can't be Postponed](#) *LA Times*

Rejecting the recommendations of a recent state report, federal officials said Wednesday they cannot postpone the deadline to start construction of California's \$43-billion bullet train project or allow the state to move the first leg of the proposed system out of the Central Valley. Earlier this month, the California Legislative Analyst's Office concluded in a detailed critique that the project was poorly managed, faced potential long-term funding problems and had a governing structure in need of sweeping reform.

[GOP and Democrats Argue Over New Jersey Transportation Plan](#) *Forbes*

New Jersey's top transportation official defended Gov. Chris Christie's \$8 billion plan for road, rail and bridge projects as fiscally responsible on Monday, as Democrats intensified their criticism of an approach they say relies too heavily on borrowing and fails to identify a permanent funding source for ongoing infrastructure needs.

The clash between Transportation Commissioner Jim Simpson and Democrats on the Assembly Transportation Committee took place during a hearing that focused on the amount of new borrowing required to fund the five-year plan. The state plans to borrow \$2.6 billion to fund various transportation improvements, with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey borrowing another \$1.8 billion to fund four other projects.

[Gov. Rick Scott Approves \\$150 million Raid on Transportation Fund](#) *Jacksonville*

Gov. Rick Scott signed a multi-billion dollar budget Thursday that included a \$150 million raid of the Florida Department of Transportation Trust fund.

Scott rejected calls to veto the raid from the Florida Transportation Builders Association and other transportation groups. Earlier this week FTBA delivered 3,600 signatures to Scott asking for a veto.

The Asphalt Contractors Association of Florida, Associated Industries of Florida, Florida Engineering Society, Florida Institute of Consulting Engineers, Florida Public Transportation Association, Florida TaxWatch, Florida Trucking Association and the Underground Utility Contractors of Florida also supported a veto.

At the bill signing ceremony Scott said the legislature gave him a choice between spending the money on education, which is where the raided money will go towards, or to road construction.

“To me that wasn’t much of a choice,” Scott said. “We’re spending it on education.”