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Transportation Revenue to Drop \$2B over Next Six Years

VDOT Press Release – October 15, 2008

RICHMOND – State and federal transportation revenues are projected to decrease between \$2.1 and \$2.6 billion over the next six years, according to a top Virginia transportation official. The state's Secretary of Transportation, Pierce R. Homer, detailed the newest reductions at a recent Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) meeting to update official transportation revenue estimates. The program was last reduced in June by \$1.1 billion.

The \$2.1 to \$2.6 billion in reductions to the existing transportation budgets and the board's Six-Year Improvement Plan is comprised of both federal and state transportation revenues. VDOT's plan also includes reducing service and staffing levels throughout the commonwealth.

During the meeting, Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Commissioner David S. Ekern presented a high-level plan outlining how VDOT will respond to the six-year revenue forecast and position itself to address long-term economic changes to transportation revenues.

"In the future, VDOT will be a smaller agency. We cannot afford to administer and deliver our services, programs and projects the same way we have in the past," said Ekern. "Safety, emergency response and maintenance of existing roadways will be our top priorities, but we will have to make some difficult decisions to live within our means."

Wyoming Legislative Panel Nixes I-80 Toll Plan, DOT Presses On

Wyoming - Lawmakers in Wyoming have decided to nix plans to toll I-80 in the state. The plan has been under consideration by the Legislature's Joint Transportation, Highways and Military Affairs Interim Committee, which would give the state's department of transportation the authority to impose tolls.

Tolls would provide much-needed revenue to cover escalating construction costs, fewer federal dollars, and help the agency deal with increased traffic and heavier vehicles using the interstate. The panel announced this past week that they would not continue to pursue the plans after receiving negative feedback about tolls.

Despite lawmakers' decision, the Wyoming Department of Transportation said they plan to continue pursuing tolling scenarios over the next year, and the interim committee says it will now focus its efforts on educating voters about the reality of the highway funding crisis and the possibility of tolls on I-80.

Purple Line to Require Demolition, Sound Walls

Washington Post – October 18, 2008

Maryland - Sound walls and demolition of more than thirty private properties, including some apartments may be required for Maryland Transit Administration's proposed Purple Line through Montgomery and Prince George's counties, according to a six-year state study released this week. The highly anticipated 250-page report revealed the first complete detailed look of the line's potential impact, including rider estimates and how it would effect the people who live and work around the 16-mile route.

Advocates say the benefits of the line far outweigh the drawbacks, most notably as a faster and more reliable east-west commuting option for people currently forced to take a series of buses in the increasing-slow traffic. The study estimated the Purple Line will attract up to 68,100 daily trips between Bethesda and New Carrollton. It would run primarily above ground, as either a light rail system or busway, with up to 20 stops.

The study found that some 64 intersections with stoplights along the corridor would need improvements, and four schools may have parts of their property seized as the line winds through the densely developed neighborhoods. Sound walls and panels covering train wheels would be required to shield residents from 18 "potential annoyance zones."

The study reported that the "most effective" light rail option in attracting the most riders and saving them the most time is also the most expensive option, at an estimated cost of \$1.6 billion in 2007 dollars. State transit officials said Gov. Martin O'Malley (D) will not make a decision on which plan to submit for federal funding until this spring, following four state-scheduled public hearings to allow public comment on the study's findings.

Precast Bridge Abutments Cut Construction Time

Wisconsin - Highway builders in Wisconsin may have found a way to build bridges 30 percent faster by using new pre-cast, segmental bridge abutments instead of the normal cast-in-place method they commonly use now. This new process is being tried on State Highway 63 near the western Wisconsin village of Baldwin, and is the first time the state department of transportation has ever used the abutments.

Each abutment consists of seven pre-cast panels mounted on pilings, and if the concept works as expected, it could eventually be approved for widespread use in WisDOT projects. The University of Wisconsin-Madison's engineering department has partnered with WisDOT in spearheading the first co-operative application of the technique.

Alfred Benesch & Company subcontracted with the university to design the bridge, as well as the pre-cast abutments. Edward Kraemer & Sons, Inc. is the prime contractor for the bridge project.

Georgia Scraps Toll Roads Proposal

Atlanta Journal-Constitution – October 21, 2008

ATLANTA – A state committee Monday killed a \$1.6 billion proposal by a private consortium to build optional toll lanes along Ga. 400. The proposal would have extended the lanes to Ga. 20 in Cumming. Committee members who voted against the proposal said they were not opposed to privately funded toll lanes, but thought this proposal was flawed.

No competing proposals were submitted when Crossroads 400, a consortium of engineering and road-building companies, made its proposal in 2004. The plan is in line with the state's "public-private" law that allows private companies to invest in public toll roads.

In January, department of transportation Commissioner Gena Evans said she was considering starting from scratch with the state's proposals.



Every time an unsolicited proposal is set aside, I wince. Or when an agency takes the unsolicited proposal and crafts something that others compete for and win based on the "good idea" that was developed by the first proposing consortium. Or when an agency takes the proposal and crafts a solution for themselves based on the due diligence of the original proposer. I fear we are creating an environment where developers will not take the chance and spend the money to prepare unsolicited proposals. In my view, that would be a bad thing. TW

California Voters to Decide on Transportation Measures

Los Angeles Daily News – October 21, 2008

California - The nation's largest bus-only transit system needs Contra Costa and Alameda county voters to approve a \$48-a-year tax increase to avoid fare increases and service cuts. The tax

would bring in about \$14 million a year, and would help AC Transit offset rising fuel costs and reductions in state funding, according to officials from the East Bay transportation agency.

Even with the increase, which will extend the current \$48-a-year parcel tax through 2019, AC Transit says they may still need to raise fares. If Measure VV passes, however, they do promise monthly passes for seniors, youth and those with disabilities will not increase for at least two years.

Meanwhile in Los Angeles County, local leaders are pushing for a half-percent sales tax increase that will generate \$40 billion for county transportation projects. The push comes just two weeks before voters head to the polls to decide on Measure R – a third county sales tax for road and transit needs over the next 30 years that would increase the county’s sales tax to 8.75 percent. Eighteen other California counties – or 80 percent of the state population – have sales-tax measures in place that pay for transportation projects.



This is an election cycle like no other in our nation’s history. The current economic turmoil is affecting every family in every state. Meanwhile, major transportation funding ballot initiatives will be placed before the voters in eight states. What will the temperament be when citizens go into the ballot box on November 4th as they consider raising their taxes to pay for transportation? We shall see. Look for the results and our analysis in the November 7th issue of the Tom Warne Report. TW

State Faces Transportation Funding Shortfall

Glenwood Springs Post Independent, CO - Oct 22, 2008

Colorado – Transportation officials in Colorado this week announced that the state is facing a projected \$149 billion funding shortfall through 2035. In an effort to stir up public support and awareness, Gov. Bill Ritter’s Blue Ribbon Transportation Panel is traveling the state on a five-week community outreach effort.

The panel’s effort stems from their finding that state residents generally think all is well with Colorado’s transportation infrastructure. Colorado Transportation Commission chairman Doug Aden said that the panel was shocked to discover from one survey that 63 percent of people in the state did not think the condition of the state’s transportation infrastructure was important to them.

The Colorado Department of Transportation has become so strapped for cash, however, that the agency is starting to talk about cutting back on snow plowing.

So far, the outreach has not only helped educate the public, but has also brought a handful of ideas from local officials and citizens from linking transportation funding to developments through impact fees.

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