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Vote YES for Better Roads

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A new study indicates that Minnesota's roads could create economic "chuckholes" for portland cement concrete and "potholes" for "blacktop" for the state's overall productivity.

The study published by the National Chamber Foundation® (NCF), a division of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, says that the overall transportation system in the United States may not have sufficient funding to maintain optimum maintenance levels; thus, decreasing overall productivity.

Currently, funds from all governmental levels contribute to federal highway maintenance and public transit financial needs. According to the study by the NCF, these funds are not sufficient to maintain the current quality of the road systems. Improving the roadway conditions with the current funding methods will be impossible.

Although the study addresses federal maintenance and funding levels, those who work or drive on Minnesota roadways know that Minnesota is no exception to this issue.

"Maintaining" roadways as defined in the study, means that all road surfaces, including pcc, asphalt and bridges, and other travel levels would need to remain the same level as they are today. In order to maintain optimum productivity levels in Minnesota, the state and local governments would need to provide the additional funds that are not met at the federal level.

When the legislature was faced with this challenge during the recent session and budget negotiations, they did not deliver. Minnesota's endeavor to maintain – and prosper – must be supported through the budget. Apparently, people are going to walk to the two new stadiums carrying their own beverages and hot dogs.

The NCF proposes both long-term and short-term strategies to generate the needed revenue on a federal level. Some short-term suggestions are indexing the motor fuel (user fees) to keep pace with inflation and creating more revenue-investment options, recapturing interest earnings on the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) balances, issuing national bond interests, U.S. Customs duties on port and intermodal freight and granting investment tax credits of some type.

Some proposed long-term solutions include creating various travel fees that would classify vehicles by weight, fuel type and consumption, environmental impact, road systems, and geography to try to create a more cost – benefit partnership regarding construction and wear on each roadway user.

Certainly, the roadway systems are important to Minnesota, our neighbors, and the nation. The availability of an adequate highway and transportation system, and the strategic changes needed to maintain it will drive economic success in Minnesota.

It seems common sense – transportation taxes should fund transportation in Minnesota. Passing the MVST Amendment this fall will ensure that all of the existing sales taxes Minnesotans pay when they buy cars and trucks will be spent on transportation projects.

A “YES” vote is something you can do at the polls to start ensuring improvement of roads, bridges and transit systems on November 7, 2006.

Minnesota is counting on you as a citizen and as an industry transportation professional providing company services to help by supporting the coalition, going to vote this November 7th and voting “YES” – it’s a start. Ask everyone you know to vote yes for better roads and transit. If you would like to get involved, sign up today at www.voteyesmn.org.