



Recap of 2008 Regional Transportation Summit

On April 23 in Naperville approximately 300 people attended a briefing to hear about the need for investment in our transportation infrastructure and to address comments and concerns to former U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert, SIU President Glenn Poshard, DuPage County Board President Bob Schillerstrom and six other members of the Governor's Illinois Works Coalition. The event was co-sponsored by TFIC and Choose DuPage. The Naperville Chamber of Commerce, DuPage County's other local chambers and two corporate sponsors – AAA Chicago Motor Club and Navistar – also supported the event.

DuPage County Board President Bob Schillerstrom acted as the local host and Master of Ceremonies for the event, and described his view of the need to improve our transportation infrastructure. AAA President Brad Roeber encouraged the audience to work harder at educating the public about the need for and impact of investment in transportation.

Hastert and Poshard each made statements about the compelling need for investment in our transportation and education infrastructure. Linda Wheeler then provided concise and dramatic statistics demonstrating the lack of investment by the state in our roads, transit and rail systems and small airports. She also discussed some of the issues that policymakers should consider when debating any capital proposal, including:

- Will our transportation system be in better or worse shape after the capital program is implemented?
- Will all new capital dollars be used for capital projects?
- Are highway funds for system preservation distributed fairly?

A general theme emerged during the comment period following Wheeler's testimony: the importance of approving a capital program that is sufficient in size to address maintenance *and* necessary expansions and improvements.

TFIC co-chair Doug Whitley then offered comments to Hastert, Poshard and the other panel members, noting that TFIC has been able to move beyond regionalism and intermodal conflicts to develop a statewide consensus on a capital proposal that meets the needs of all areas of the state and all modes of transportation. He, like many of the speakers who followed, underscored the need for a program of significant size (at least **\$14.4 billion in new state spending for transportation alone**), one that would address maintenance needs as well as new projects.

Randy Blankenhorn of Chicago Metropolitan Area Planning Agency encouraged the Illinois Works panel to consider five priorities: a program of significant scope; a comprehensive program involving all modes of transportation; the necessity of a transparent selection process; the need to raise new revenues to fund the program; and the need to spend wisely on prioritized projects.

Jim Reilly, chair of the Regional Transportation Authority, made a compelling case for a significant capital program and the need to focus on the question of how much new state funding the program would provide for investment in the transportation network. Reilly cautioned panel members that a capital program needs to address the problems policymakers and their

constituents cite – the need to repair the existing infrastructure – because a smaller program would disappoint citizens who will need to see the impact of their investment in order to be happy with the outcome. Reilly also noted that the federal funds that are at risk are associated with transit new-starts or expansions to the system. We need to raise state dollars in order to maintain our current roads, transit and rail systems. And he underscored the need to “lock-box” capital revenues so that all of the monies raised for capital are spent for capital projects.

State Representatives Kathy Ryg and Elaine Nekritz talked about their interest in finding a consensus for capital that would fund necessary projects. Nekritz also emphasized the need to fund passenger and freight rail improvements. State Senator Kirk Dillard suggested that, from a policy perspective, it might make sense to consider the sales tax on gasoline as a source of funding for transportation capital and noted that the sales tax grows as prices grow, unlike the per-gallon tax on motor fuel that transportation currently relies on.

Two mayors from the area talked about local needs and emphasized that the state’s lack of investment on state roadways that run through their communities reflects badly on the local officials. The Mayor of Aurora noted that local governments are “where the rubber hits the pothole.”

Major media outlets including WBBM Radio and the Chicago Tribune sent reporters.