



AFSCME Legislative Agenda 2017

Moving Forward on Transportation

Budget for Maintenance, Design and Inspection

There's no way our economy can grow and compete on crumbling infrastructure that takes a beating each winter. The need is urgent statewide. Half of our roads and bridges are in poor condition with dangerous potholes everywhere.

Meanwhile, MnDOT has 500 fewer AFSCME designers, inspectors and maintenance workers than it did a decade ago. With a shrinking workforce, it's impossible to keep up with aging infrastructure.

We know that staffing up would save millions of dollars. The Taxpayer Transportation Accountability Act requires a state employee cost comparison before outsourcing contracts over \$250,000. MnDOT data shows that 30 of the 39 projects that were outsourced in 2015 could have been done by state employees at a lower cost. If that work had been done in-house it would have saved taxpayers \$1.8 million. That savings would cover total annual compensation for 25 additional workers. With sufficient workers, for example, MnDOT crews can paint an epoxy stripe for 15-cents a foot, compared with contractors who charge 32-cents a foot.

Outsourcing our work is an accountability problem. Having contractors scope and inspect their own work is simply wrong – it's like putting a fox in the hen house.

The Legislature has recently authorized millions in extra borrowing for selected road projects called Corridors of Commerce. It added new lane miles, but didn't budget for maintenance. That's been the pattern for the last decade. Growing our transportation system without plans to maintain it is like buying a new car and never changing the oil.

AFSCME Council 5 is part of Transportation Forward and Progress in Motion, two statewide coalitions advocating for transportation funding this session. Any real solution must balance the needs of Greater Minnesota and the metro. The funding package must be dedicated to roads, bridges, transit, bike and pedestrian infrastructure. Funded by a wholesale fuel tax for roads and a metro sales tax for transit, better transportation would cost Minnesotans less than what most folks spend on coffee.

Action – Ask your legislators to:

- **Budget for maintenance, design and inspection** because there is no federal funding for plowing snow, patching potholes and inspecting bridges. The state can save money by rebuilding MnDOT's shrinking workforce. Include General Fund money in any transportation package to pay for maintenance, design and inspection.
- **Dedicate new revenue for a 10-year plan** to fix crumbling roads and bridges, expand access to transit, and create safer bike and pedestrian routes in communities across the state.