

Association of Minnesota Counties

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Lt. Governor Smith, MnDOT Commissioner Zelle, joined local county commissioners and community leaders in southeastern Minnesota to discuss regional and statewide transportation funding needs and opportunities



ROCHESTER, MN – This morning the Association of Minnesota Counties hosted a breakfast forum to discuss transportation needs and opportunities facing southeastern Minnesota. Over 50 area county commissioners, mayors, and county engineers attended, along with local legislators, city, and community leaders.

Lieutenant Governor Tina Smith and Minnesota Department of Transportation Commissioner Charlie Zelle spoke about statewide and local transportation needs and opportunities.

The forum was moderated by Olmsted County Commissioner Paul Wilson at the Olmsted County Board Room. Olmsted County Engineer Kaye Bieniek noted that Olmsted County faces a shortfall of \$8 million annually in basic preservation of county infrastructure. She also mentioned addressing the deterioration of County Road 133 and the need to replace the bridge on County Road 110 near Dover as examples of transportation needs in the community. “It’s critical that the legislature passes a comprehensive funding solution so that we can properly address road safety, alleviate congestion, provide reliable infrastructure, and help facilitate commerce in our state,” said Wilson.

Hennepin County Commissioner Peter McLaughlin also spoke at the meeting to highlight the importance of passing a comprehensive approach to transportation infrastructure that meets needs throughout the state. “Past successes have shown that we can accomplish more by working together as partners throughout the state,” said McLaughlin. “We cannot address the individual transportation challenges our county face in isolation. It’s clear that in order for us to address our local transportation projects, we need a funding package from the legislature that addresses our needs for roads, bridges, and transit statewide. In addition - the metro area is ready to step up, just as other metro areas around the country have done, to use a regional sales tax for transit that would reduce the state’s operating costs and allow our region to move forward.”

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