

Transportation Development Association of Wisconsin: Economic forum: Will Wisconsin follow Indiana's lead, or be left behind?

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[MILWAUKEE...] Recognizing that the efficient movement of goods and people is at the heart of a vibrant economy, states across the country, including some of the most fiscally conservative, are investing in transportation infrastructure. That's the main takeaway from the Transportation Development Association's Economic Forum, held at the Milwaukee Athletic Club on Monday.

"Booming states like Georgia and most recently Indiana, understand that transportation investment and a thriving economy are inextricably linked," said Craig Thompson, Executive Director of TDA. "While these and other states continue to make long-term investments, we're hopeful that Wisconsin will follow suit."

Forum attendees heard from national experts and legislators from these states, as well as from Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R- Rochester) who expressed optimism that the legislature could soon agree on a comprehensive, long-term transportation funding plan. Vos explained that he and Joint Finance Co-Chair John Nygren (R- Marinette) tabbed Brookfield Republican Dale Kooyenga with the task of drafting a transportation budget.

"He has worked on it very diligently; I'm optimistic in the next week or two we will be able to produce a package of reforms, potentially revenues and prioritization

that will meet the criteria that Governor Walker set last summer,” Vos said at the forum. “I know, in Wisconsin, sometimes it takes us a while to get to the right answer, but eventually we find it.”

Indiana State Representative Ed Soliday, the Assistant Majority Floor Leader of their General Assembly, detailed the process his state took in developing their transportation plan. Last week, the Indiana legislature approved the largest transportation infrastructure investment in state history. Hoosiers will see nearly \$900 million in new annual funding for state roads and bridges by 2024, and local communities will see an average of \$300 million in new road and bridge funding each year, for a total of \$1.2 billion a year.

Four states – Indiana, Montana, Tennessee and California – have passed significant, long-term transportation packages so far this year, for a total of 21 states since 2013.

“Wisconsin can’t be left behind,” said Thompson. “Everyone agrees about the necessity of good, safe roads. Now, we just need to muster the political will to make it happen.”

About TDA

From the buses in Racine to the Port of Green Bay to the rail lines in Superior to the Waukesha County Airport to the roads we use every day, Wisconsin’s transportation network is the key to connecting goods to market and people to jobs.

Founded in 1971, the Transportation Development Association of Wisconsin promotes the vitality and safety of the state’s transportation system, including public transit systems, public-use and general aviation airports, railroads, commercial ports, and roads. TDA’s members comprise business, labor, units of government, regional planning organizations, as well as individuals.

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