

McCabe campaign: Calls for 'fix 'em first' & 'pay as we pave' policies on roads

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MAY 1, 2018 - Wisconsin's roads and bridges are deteriorating badly and the state needs a whole new approach to strengthening its transportation infrastructure that prioritizes fixing existing roads before expanding or building new ones and paying as we pave to end excessive borrowing, governor candidate Mike McCabe said today as he called for bringing back automatic adjustments in the gas tax for inflation to keep revenue in line with road expenses.

Of all the options available for taking care of our roads and bridges, the two worst ones - neglecting basic upkeep and relying on heavy borrowing - have been the pillars of state transportation policy for years.

"Wisconsin can't have bad roads and a good economy. And our kids and grandkids can't have more debt and a bright future," McCabe said. "Decent roads and bridges are a necessity whether you live in the city or out in the country. We have to look out for each other and make sure everyone everywhere in our state can travel safely."

"By one measure, we now have the [fourth worst](#) roads in the country. By another, Wisconsin is [49th out of 50](#) states in road quality. Bridges in the state have been allowed to deteriorate to their [worst condition since 2003](#). That's not my assessment, it's the Federal Highway Administration's," he said.

Lawmakers were more than two months late in putting together the most recent state budget, and the one they came up with cut maintenance funding and road

worker pay and will cause the quality of Wisconsin's roads to [further deteriorate](#), according to the state Department of Transportation.

"What's even worse is Wisconsin is putting so much road spending on a credit card instead of paying as we pave. Back in 2000, only 7 cents of every dollar in Wisconsin's road fund went to repaying debt. This year, 20 cents out of every dollar raised for roads isn't paying for roads but rather goes for debt payments," McCabe said, adding that under the current budget, the nonpartisan Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance estimates the portion of transportation fund revenue going to debt payments will rise to almost 24% by 2019.

"Saddling future generations with more debt is not a responsible answer to our road woes. Neither is pandering to the powerful road building industry by favoring new construction and highway expansion over basic upkeep to the point where small towns and rural areas are left with no choice but to tear up paved roads and [go back to gravel](#) because they can't afford to keep filling the potholes," McCabe said. The governor and his legislative allies slapped a new fee on hybrid vehicles in their latest state budget, a move McCabe called a short-sighted and irresponsible response to what ails Wisconsin's roads that discourages fuel conservation by punishing hybrid car ownership.

"Thriving economically and surviving ecologically means embracing a clean energy future and depending less on fossil fuels," McCabe said. "It was a horrible mistake to turn down \$800 million in federal funds for development of high-speed rail in Wisconsin. That money could have gone a long way towards bringing Wisconsin's transportation infrastructure into the 21st Century and would have provided a great deal of employment to boot. We should explore any and all opportunities to correct the mistake that was made. We all pay federal taxes. Whenever we can, we should bring that money back to Wisconsin to help our state. We don't get tax rebates when we turn down federal funds. What we pay just goes to help other states instead of coming back to Wisconsin."

As for the state's crumbling roads, McCabe said: "There are better ways. Responsible ways. Prioritize road maintenance. Fix the roads we've already got before expanding or building new ones. End the reckless borrowing. Pay as we pave. Bring back gas tax indexing. That policy was started in 1985 with [support from both Republicans and Democrats](#) and kept Wisconsin's roads among the finest in the country until it was abruptly ended 20 years later and replaced with a toxic combination of neglecting upkeep and borrowing for new construction that is Wisconsin's current approach."

Supporting video: [Watch Here](#)