

Sen. Cowles: Weekly GOP radio address: Paving the way to highway project accountability

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GREEN BAY– Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) offered the weekly Republican radio address today.

The audio file of this week's address can be found here:

<http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/02/cowles/connect/0530-radio-address/>

Below is a written transcript of the address:

Every day, our state government spends hundreds of millions of dollars to provide the services Wisconsinites have come to expect.

Hi. I'm State Senator Robert Cowles from Green Bay. As Co-Chair of the Legislature's Audit Committee, I believe that while the state provides these services, it's crucial that we ensure accountability and oversight for state tax dollars.

An audit report that we authorized from last year made headlines when the evaluation found that the costs for major highway projects at the Department of Transportation exceeded original estimates by more than 110%, totaling over \$3.8 billion over ten years.

The long-term miscalculation left DOT overworked and underfunded while leading to drastic project delays and wildly inflated costs.

My colleagues and I agreed that this audit should serve as a resource to tighten up DOT practices while ensuring that project estimates correctly reflect true costs.

To provide more accountability, the Audit Committee introduced Senate Bill 85 which turns the audit into action by laying out several requirements of DOT for major highway projects. These changes make the cost of our major highway projects more upfront and more transparent to ensure DOT is accountable for each dollar spent in our transportation fund.

After passing both houses of the Legislature with strong, bipartisan support, Governor Walker signed SB 85 into law as 2017 Wisconsin Act 247.

Perhaps no governmental function impacts a resident's daily life more than roads. Wisconsin taxpayers deserve quality roads, but funding major highway projects without accountability is irresponsible. Act 247 will help to guarantee that our state receives the quality highways we desire through bolstering the accountability Wisconsinites demand.

It's encouraging that this common-sense legislation was supported by a bipartisan group of legislators, and I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Legislature to enact more accountability in our state government.