



April 29, 2019

Dear Members of the Illinois General Assembly:

The public deserves a safe and reliable transportation system, and our regional and state economy depend on it. This session, the 101st General Assembly should pass a transportation revenue package that uses real and sustainable funding -- not gimmicks -- to fix our roads, bridges, and transit. More than half of the states have raised new revenues for their transportation systems in the past seven years. Illinois is falling behind.

Our transportation infrastructure is deteriorating. The state has had to pursue emergency repairs to bridges on I-80, as has the City of Chicago on Lake Shore Drive. Based on its current funding, the Illinois Department of Transportation expects road condition to decline further. Meanwhile, Metra riders face persistent delays and unreliable commutes, some traveling in coaches that were manufactured in the 1950s and 60s. The Regional Transportation Authority has reported a very large maintenance backlog for Metra, Pace, and Chicago Transit Authority. We must do better.

Historically the state has responded to transportation needs through capital bills. But prior capital bills have been sporadic, inadequate in size, too focused on bonding, and funded by novel revenue sources that did not live up to expectations. Nor did these bills ensure that the funding went to high-performing projects that provide the most public benefit.

We need a new kind of capital bill, one that is sustainably funded, adequate to the task, and that includes a reliable annual pay-as-you-go element. The funding should come from user fees, which are the fairest way to fund the system. It should encourage raising local revenues to invest along with state revenues. And finally, it should use a transparent, data-driven process to select projects.

Funding must go to our most urgent priorities. The public deserves a process that ensures transportation dollars are spent wisely. We need to be able to flexibly address needs on road, transit, and freight systems, as well as funding bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. At the same time, we should factor in project readiness. This performance-based approach should be tailored to work statewide, allowing all areas to access the funds they need for large, important projects.

We are ready to work with you to move the state forward.

Respectfully,

Toni Preckwinkle, President
Cook County Board of Commissioners

Sandy Hart, Chair
Lake County Board

Dan Cronin, Chair
DuPage County Board

Jack Franks, Chair
McHenry County Board

Chris Lauzen, Chair
Kane County Board

Scott Gryder, Chair
Kendall County Board

Lawrence M. Walsh, County Executive
Will County