



michigan municipal league

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Legislature Must Act Now to Create Transportation Jobs and Economic Development

Mass Transit, Fixing Roads and Bridges Would Generate Thousands of Jobs

LANSING, Mich. — Mayors and other community leaders today urged the lame duck Michigan Legislature to jumpstart the state's stalled economy by increasing funding to repair crumbling roads and bridges and significantly expand mass transit.

By adopting the funding and reform recommendations proposed Nov. 10 by the Michigan Transportation Funding Task Force, state lawmakers can generate thousands of good jobs and billions in new transit-related commercial and residential development across the state. Lawmakers must approve the task force recommendations before Dec. 31 when the 94th Legislature officially expires, mayors and other local leaders said at a Capitol news conference today.

"Michigan has two urgent needs: we need thousands of new jobs and we need a solution for our crumbling infrastructure and urban economies," said Lansing Mayor Virgil Bernero. "The Transportation Funding Task Force has proposed a good level of investment in transportation that will help jumpstart the state's economy, fix our roads and bridges and create jobs and investment. Michigan's unemployment rate is hovering near 10 percent. The Legislature must not wait any longer."

The Transportation Funding Task Force was created by Governor Jennifer Granholm and the Michigan Legislature in 2007. Its 13 members include leaders of the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, organized labor, state and local governments, both major political parties, public transit, aviation, tourism, and the general public. The report recommends reforms to make transit operations more efficient and cost effective, and significant new investments in public transit and roads to generate jobs and economic development.

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After months of work and public meetings across the state, the task force report concludes: “The consequences to Michigan if action is not taken to address the need for increased transportation investment are dire indeed.” Michigan will lose up to \$1 billion in federal funds each year, “putting more than 17,000 jobs at risk.”

Increasing transportation investment to a “good level” will “sustain 126,000 Michigan jobs, attract new business, and open new global markets for Michigan products and services. It will yield nearly \$15 billion in other economic benefits for all sectors of the Michigan economy.”

Dan Gilmartin, executive director and CEO of the Michigan Municipal League, noted the task force’s support for significantly expanding public transit including buses, light rail and commuter rail. He said cities across the nation that have built rapid transit systems in the past 15 years — Dallas, Minneapolis, Denver, Charlotte, Portland — have gained thousands of new jobs and billions of dollars in new private sector development, including residential housing, retail stores, restaurants, entertainment venues and other cultural attractions, grocery stores and shopping centers, and more.

“Investing in Michigan’s transportation system is an investment in jobs and economic development, an investment in the state’s economic recovery,” Gilmartin said. “Cities and states across the nation that have embraced rapid transit have gained thousands of good jobs and billions in new development and redevelopment.”

Saline Mayor Gretchen Driskell said in addition to creating jobs, transit options such as buses and light rail attract young, college educated people to live in cities and states.

“College-educated people, especially young people, are moving to cities that offer public transit and other alternatives to driving,” she said. “States that have cities with large concentrations of young people with college degrees tend to have lower unemployment rates and higher levels of personal income. By acting now, the Legislature can point Michigan in that direction.”

For more information about transit jobs and development in Michigan, please visit Get Michigan Moving at www.GetMichiganMoving.org.

The Michigan Municipal League advocates on behalf of its member communities in Lansing, Washington D.C., and the courts; provides educational opportunities for elected and appointed municipal officials; and assists municipal leaders in administering services to their communities through League programs and services. For more information, visit www.mml.org.

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