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**TRIP REPORT FINDS KEY TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS NEEDED TO SUPPORT REGION'S GROWTH FACE A FUNDING "RED LIGHT"; TWIN CITIES AREA IN NEED OF CRITICAL TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS TO IMPROVE REGION'S HIGHWAY, TRANSIT, BIKE AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORK**

*Eds.: The report includes information, including funding status, on 20 critically needed transportation projects in the Twin Cities area and 30 critically needed transportation projects in Greater Minnesota. These projects would enhance quality of life by improving access, relieving traffic congestion, improving safety, supporting economic development opportunities and improving physical conditions.*

**St. Paul, MN** – More than half of the key transportation improvements identified by TRIP as being critically needed in the Twin Cities area are unfunded, jeopardizing future quality of life gains in the region due to an inadequate transportation system. These transportation projects would support the region's future development by improving access, safety and conditions according to a new report released today by [TRIP](http://tripnet.org), a Washington, DC based national transportation organization.

The TRIP report "[\*Project Green Light: Moving Minnesota's Top Transportation Improvements Forward\*](#)," lists critically needed transportation improvements in the Twin Cities region and in Greater Minnesota, including projects to operate, maintain, build, expand or modernize roads, highways, bridges, mass transit systems, rail, bicycle and pedestrian facilities. These improvements, which were selected by TRIP, would enhance development throughout the region and the state by increasing personal and commercial mobility, easing congestion, improving safety and conditions and enhancing Minnesota's desirability as a place to live, visit and do business.

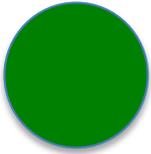
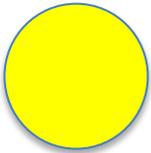
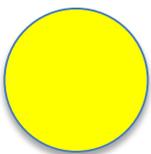
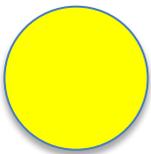
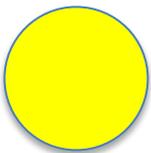
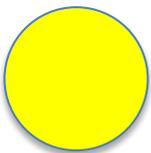
But the report finds that most of the critically needed projects in the Twin Cities area as well as in Greater Minnesota lack adequate funding. TRIP rated each needed transportation improvement as either having a green light, a yellow light or a red light in terms of the availability of funding.

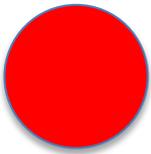
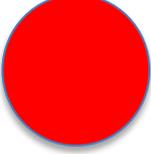
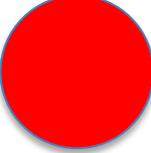
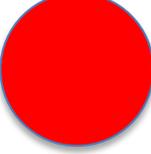
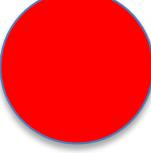
In the Twin Cities area, TRIP finds that only one of the region's 20 critically needed transportation projects has a green light, to signify that full funding is available or is anticipated to be available by 2019; five projects are rated a yellow light because either a portion of needed funding is anticipated to be available by 2019 or the funding is uncertain; and 14 projects are rated a red light because funding is not currently available and, under current funding, is not anticipated to be available through 2019.

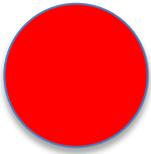
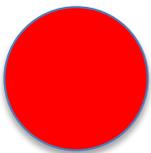
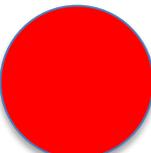
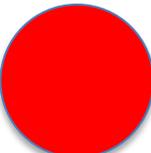
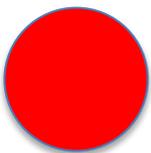
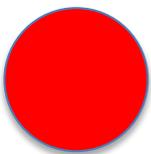
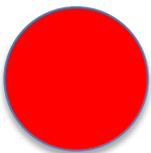
"Throughout Minnesota there are many needed transportation projects that are ready to go, but we don't have the funding to begin construction," said Russell Hess, political coordinator of the Laborers District Council

of Minnesota & North Dakota. “Now is not the time to take our foot off the gas. The legislature must invest in transportation this year to help create jobs and keep Minnesota economically competitive.”

The Twin Cities region’s 20 transportation improvements, as determined by TRIP, which are critically needed to support a high quality of living in the region and to support the region’s development goals and their funding status are listed in the following table. Additional information on these projects can be found in [Appendix A](#) of the report.

	<p><b>Re-deck and repair TH 65 bridge over Mississippi River in Minneapolis.</b> This project, which will cost a minimum of \$33 million, would re-deck and repair the historic TH 65 bridge over the Mississippi River between downtown Minneapolis and NE/SE Minneapolis.</p>
	<p><b>Re-deck and repair I-35W bridge over Minnesota River in Hennepin County.</b> This project, which will cost a minimum of \$100 million, would include the re-decking and repair of the I-35W bridge over the Minnesota River in Hennepin County. This is a critical crossing of the Minnesota River between the south metro and job centers and the airport in Hennepin County.</p>
	<p><b>Increased Bus Rapid Transit service on major arterial corridors in Twin Cities.</b> This project would provide Bus Rapid Transit, including all-day frequent station-to-station service, on up to 12 significant arterial corridors in the Twin Cities. Two potential corridors, Snelling Avenue and, West 7th have partial funding identified. Ten remaining corridors including East 7th, Nicollet, Central Avenue, Chicago, Robert Street, American Boulevard, Fremont /Emerson, Lake Street, Penn Avenue and Broadway Avenue do not have identified funding. This improvement would provide a faster, higher amenity transit service in these strong existing transit markets to attract new riders and improve the experience of existing riders.</p>
	<p><b>Extend the Green Line Light Rail Southwest in the Twin Cities region.</b> This project, which will cost approximately \$1.25 billion, would extend the Green Line to the southwest in order to connect Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Minnetonka, Hopkins and Eden Prairie. This expansion will provide an important connection between Minneapolis and the southwest suburbs, linking commuters to many major employers both in downtown Minneapolis and along the entire corridor.</p>
	<p><b>Extend the Blue Line Light Rail Northwest in the Twin Cities region.</b> This project, which will cost approximately \$1 billion, would extend the Blue Line northwest to connect Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal and Brooklyn Park. The Blue Line extension will provide an important connection between downtown Minneapolis and the northwest suburbs connecting to the planned Target campus in Brooklyn Park and also allowing trips to connect thru to the MOA and airport along the existing Blue Line.</p>
	<p><b>Providing Orange Line Bus Rapid Transit along I-35W south from Minneapolis to Burnsville.</b> This project, which will cost approximately \$150 million, would provide all-day, station-to-station bus rapid transit along I-35W from downtown Minneapolis through southwest Minneapolis, Richfield, Bloomington and Burnsville. The Orange Line will connect stations along the corridor at Lake Street, 46<sup>th</sup> Street, 66<sup>th</sup> Street, American Boulevard, 98<sup>th</sup> Street and the Burnsville station.</p>

	<p><b>Increase funding for maintenance and operation of region's roads and highways.</b> A minimum of an additional \$10 million annually is needed to support routine maintenance of the regions roads and highways, including minor repairs and snow removal as well as to support the operations of the system, including the increase of traffic management systems. Timely and adequate maintenance will increase the useful life of roads and bridges and prevent worsening conditions.</p>
	<p><b>Pavement repairs on I-94 between St. Paul and Minneapolis.</b> This project, which will cost a minimum of \$300 million, would replace pavement and other infrastructure on I-94 between St. Paul and Minneapolis due to extreme deterioration. Temporary overlays are insufficient as the subsurface layers continue to deteriorate. This improvement is extremely important to traffic flow in the metro area and for connecting the two downtowns. These improvements will extend the life of the pavement and contribute to traveler safety.</p>
	<p><b>Add I-35W managed lanes (MnPASS) between TH 36 and TH 10 in Ramsey County.</b> This project, which will cost a minimum of \$100 million, would expand the managed lanes on I-35W between TH 36 and TH 10 in Ramsey County in order to relieve congestion during peak travel periods. This improvement will improve traffic efficiency, increase transit ridership and the use of high occupancy vehicles, provide alternate choices for commuters during peak hours, enhance economic development prospects for the area and improve safety.</p>
	<p><b>Bus Rapid Transit expansion on key Twin Cities' highway corridors.</b> This project would expand the Bus Rapid Transit system in the Twin Cities along key corridors, including I-35W North, TH 36, TH 169, I-94 West, I-394, I-35E North and TH 61 (Red Rock). The regional highway system is continuing to become more congested as population and employment grows within the region. Highway BRT will provide additional connections between major regional centers of activity and residents while taking advantage of improvements in travel time as a result of coordinated highway investments.</p>
	<p><b>Adding eastbound auxiliary lanes to I-494 from France Avenue to I-35W in the Twin Cities.</b> This project, which is estimated to cost between \$10 to \$17 million, would add eastbound auxiliary lanes on I-494 from France Avenue to I-35W in Hennepin County in order to relieve severe peak-period congestion. This improvement will allow for more efficient movement of traffic and improve safety.</p>
	<p><b>Add managed lanes (MnPASS) on I-94 between TH 55 and I-35E (Downtown Minneapolis to Downtown St. Paul).</b> This project, which will cost a minimum of \$100 million, would add managed lanes on I-94 between Downtown Minneapolis and Downtown St. Paul, the state's two largest commercial centers. This improvement will improve traffic efficiency, increase transit ridership and the use of high occupancy vehicles, provide alternate choices for commuters during peak hours, enhance economic development prospects for the area and improve safety.</p>
	<p><b>Add managed lanes (MnPASS) on I-35W between Downtown Minneapolis and TH 36.</b> This project, which will cost a minimum of \$100 million, would expand the managed lanes on I-35W between Downtown Minneapolis and TH 36, which currently experiences significant congestion during peak travel hours. This improvement will improve traffic efficiency, increase transit ridership and the use of high occupancy vehicles, provide alternate choices for commuters during peak hours, enhance economic development prospects for the area and improve safety.</p>

	<p><b>Expansion of bus service in Twin Cities region.</b> This project would expand base bus service in the Twin Cities region, including more routes, increased frequency of service, longer hours and to provide connecting service to transitways. Expanding bus service will allow for the accommodation of the anticipated 900,000 residents and 570,000 jobs in the Twin Cities area by 2040. Growth in the bus system will be required to serve this increased population.</p>
	<p><b>Expansion of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.</b> Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are an important part of the multimodal transportation network. This project, which is estimated to cost an additional \$50 million annually statewide, would allow local and state governments to construct additional bicycle and pedestrian facilities beyond only those that can be included in existing highway projects to meet the growing demand.</p>
	<p><b>Flyover ramp from northbound I-35W to westbound I-494 in Hennepin County.</b> This project, which is estimated to cost between \$50 and \$125 million, would construct a flyover ramp from northbound I-35W to westbound I-494 in Hennepin County in order to relieve congestion. High traffic volumes, economic growth along the corridor and harsh weather conditions have led to longstanding congestion, safety and flooding issues at the I-35W/I-494 interchange. Completion of this project would improve safety, relieve congestion, allow for future development and improve access to transit alternatives in adjacent communities.</p>
	<p><b>Extend I-35E managed lanes (MnPASS) from Little Canada Road to north of TH 96 in the Twin Cities area.</b> This project would extend the managed lanes on I-35E from Little Canada Road to north of TH 96 in Ramsey County. This improvement will improve traffic efficiency, increase transit ridership and the use of high occupancy vehicles, provide alternate choices for commuters during peak hours, enhance economic development prospects for the area and improve safety.</p>
	<p><b>Add managed lanes (MnPASS) on I-494 in the southwest Twin Cities metro area.</b> This project would expand the managed lanes along I-494 in the south/southwest metro area, including Bloomington, Eden Prairie and Edina. This major interstate connects several employment centers and the MSP Airport. This improvement will improve traffic efficiency, increase transit ridership and the use of high occupancy vehicles, provide alternate choices for commuters during peak hours, enhance economic development prospects for the area and improve safety.</p>
	<p><b>Add bus rapid transit or light rail in the Gateway and Rush Line corridors in the eastern and northeastern Twin Cities area.</b> This project would add bus rapid transit or light rail in the Gateway and Rush Line corridors in the eastern and northeastern Twin Cities area. This would provide capacity and added service levels to high-demand transit corridors currently not served by light rail or bus rapid transit. The lines would connect major regional employment and activity centers and foster future economic development in a growing region.</p>
	<p><b>Add managed lanes (MnPASS) on TH 169 between I-494 and Marschall Road in Hennepin and Scott Counties.</b> This project would add managed lanes on TH 169 between I-494 and Marschall Road. This is a major trunk highway over the Minnesota River, connecting several employment centers in the southwest Metro. This improvement will enhance traffic movement, increase transit ridership and the use of high occupancy vehicles, provide a choice for commuters during peak periods, enhance economic development and improve safety.</p>

Turning the red lights, which currently face many of the region's critically needed transportation improvements, to green lights, will require increased transportation investment at the local, state and federal level. But a lack of adequate funding of the federal program may result in a significant cut in federal funding for the state's roads, highways, bridges and transit systems. In fact, the impact of inadequate federal surface transportation revenues could be felt as early as summer of 2014, when the balance in the Highway Account of the federal Highway Trust Fund is expected to drop below \$1 billion, which will trigger delays in the federal reimbursement to Minnesota and other states for road, highway and bridge projects, which would likely result in states delaying or postponing numerous projects. And if a lack of adequate revenue into the Federal Highway Trust Fund is not addressed by Congress, funding for highway and transit improvements in Minnesota could be cut by \$695 million billion for the federal fiscal year beginning October 1, 2014.

“Giving the green light to the many critically needed transportation projects in the Twin Cities area and around the state is going to require increased funding from all levels of government,” said Will Wilkins, TRIP's executive director. “Unfortunately, unless Congress acts this year to adequately fund the Federal Highway Trust Fund, Minnesota is going to see its federal funding decrease dramatically starting this summer, making it that much more difficult to green light these needed improvements.”