

Lobbyist tells road board to expect funding fix soon

ADVERTISEMENT



SAVE BIG WITH OUR ONLINE COUPONS

Our Web site now offers searchable and printable coupons for dozens of your favorite brands.

How much can you save? CLICK HERE!

Sample coupons shown:
1. Save \$14 on 1 lb. or more of Kretschmar Deli Product. (Expires 10/20/09)
2. Save \$54 on 1 lb. or more of Kretschmar Deli Product. (Expires 10/20/09)

By Dennis Pelham
Daily Telegram
Sun Oct 18, 2009, 03:00 PM EDT

MADISON TWP., Mich. -

There is a chance the state Legislature will do something about Michigan's worsening road-funding crisis by early next year, the Lenawee County Road Commission board was told Friday by one of Lansing's top lobbyists.

"I think we're going to see it because the need is so great," said Nell Kuhnmuensch, director of Governmental Consultant Services Inc. and a long-time lobbyist for road commissions.

Lenawee County road commissioners said they are discouraged by a lack of action in the Legislature as money for maintaining roads continues to shrink because of the slow economy and more fuel-efficient vehicles.

Roads in Michigan are funded primarily by a per-gallon tax on fuel. The road commission's revenue from fuel taxes is down 5 percent this year and expected to drop another 5 percent next year.

"It's hard to find any good news no matter where you look or what you read," said Don Isley. The Legislature has known for years the road-funding system is breaking down and a major change is needed, he said. But state lawmakers have done nothing, he said.

"I don't know what they're afraid of," said Stanley Wilson. "Are they afraid they'll lose their jobs like the rest of the people in Michigan?"

"I don't know what to do anymore," said board chairman Robert Emery. He has met with legislators and worked with organizations trying to solve the problem, he said, but there is nothing to show for it.

"We can't go this way for the next 10 years and expect to continue services without funding," Emery said. "The end is coming. Somebody has to come up with an idea for funding roads."

Agreement to do something soon seems to be growing beneath the surface, said Kuhnmuensch.

"Right now, nobody is going to talk about it in the state Legislature," she said. There is a feeling in the Capitol

building, however, that the approaching loss of federal highway money due to a lack of state matching funds will bring together a majority vote to increase revenue for roads.

State Sen. Jud Gilbert, R-Algonac, has a bill that would raise the diesel tax by 4 cents to match the 19-cent per gallon gasoline tax, Kuhnmuensch said. That would generate an estimated \$26 million to \$30 million that Gilbert would like to put toward matching federal money for bridges, she said.

There would still be a loss by 2011 of a large share of federal highway money for Michigan, she said, unless some other source of state revenue is tapped.

One idea, she said, is to replace the per-gallon tax at the pump with a tax on wholesale fuel purchases that could go as high as 34 cents per gallon, depending on prices. Another idea is a 3-3-3 plan of raising the per-gallon tax at the pump by 3 cents a year for three years.

There seems to be a widespread expectation that something will be done after the current state budget impasse is resolved, she said. If legislators wait until the lame duck session after next year's elections, she said, it will be too late to avoid huge losses in federal highway funds from a lack of matching state money.

"We need you to continue sending your messages to Lansing because it's easy to forget," Kuhnmuensch told the board.

Emery said earlier in the meeting he agrees with an opinion he heard from someone that an outcry from the public over deteriorating roads is needed to convince legislators to act.

"By then we'll be so far behind we won't be able to catch up for years," Emery said.

Comments (0)

Login or register to post a comment:

Login

Username:

Password:

[Forgot password](#)

Login

Register

Email:

First Name:

Last Name:

I agree to the [terms of use](#)

I am over 13 years of age

NOTE: Your inbox must accept emails from "no-reply@gatehousemedia.com"

Register

Connect to Remote Desktops

Connect to and support any pc or mac -
Control & repair remotely from your screen.



[TRY FREE NOW](#)

BOMGAR™



www.bomgar.com

[Feedback - Ads by Google](#)

WEB BROWSING REDEFINED



FIREFOX