

Good morning,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding the state of transportation funding. I am Gretchen Driskell, Mayor of the City of Saline. Over the past decade, I have served in many policy roles in transportation planning. Currently, I am a vice chair with SEMCOG. I also was chair of SEMCOG Transportation Advisory Council and current member, and served as chair and the MML appointee to the Citizens Advisory Council for the Transportation Funding Task Force (TF2). I am our cities representative to WATS (our county transportation planning agency) and a former chair of that organization. Additionally, I served on both the MML and the National League of Cities Transportation Policy committees and I am currently on the National League of Cities board of trustees. I work as a commercial real estate broker recruiting national and international business to the region. The reason I tell you all this is to make clear that I have a valid comprehension of the state of our transportation system and the crisis we have created by not taking action regarding additional funding to this system.

In Saline, we have been fortunate to have our Ford/Visteon, now ACH facility (1.5M sf), remain open during this automotive roller coaster ride. The city has an excellent relationship with management and we worked closely with Ford as they transitioned the closing and consolidation of 2 other facilities into ours. That entailed a \$100M investment on Fords' part, which included adding 23 shipping docks. Last week they announced an additional \$45M investment into the plant. Employment is at an all time high of 2,000. Why do I bring this up?

This facility now has 300 trucks going in and out of the plant every day. Onto a highway (US12) that has been documented for decades as being one of the most heavily travelled 2lane highways in the state. Ford has made a financial commitment to our state to the tune of \$150M, why doesn't the state step forward and make an investment in this vital economic corridor? I stood before this same committee 3 years ago when you held your public hearing and made very similar remarks. And there has still been no change to the underfunding of our transportation system.

The county has 2 very exciting transit initiatives underway. The Ann Arbor-Detroit commuter rail and the US23 Corridor commuter rail (aka WALLY). In my work as CAC chair I sat on the passenger intermodal committee. We studied transit systems across the country. We documented the additional private dollar investment that comes into communities around transit hubs and commuter rail lines. This investment ranged from \$6-9 of **private dollars** for every \$1 invested in the system. Additionally this has become a business recruitment issue. International companies look for transit to support their employees, our inability to provide this alternative mode of transport makes us less competitive in national searches.

I am sure you have heard by now all the statistics of where we stand vis-à-vis other states regarding transportation funding. How counties are cutting back to the minimum and just doing maintenance. How we are spending half of what is needed in this state to maintain our system let alone become competitive. How the longer we wait to fix roads the more expensive the fix becomes.

I just don't understand the inability to do a minor increase in the gas tax. The price of gas can change more in one week than the proposed increase! The argument can be made in multiple ways that this is an investment that gets a high return. It is probably the clearest public infrastructure investment with an outcome of significant return of all the spending we do in Lansing. For at least the last three years we have been talking about 2010, the **last year** we will have enough money to match the federal dollars. This is money that our citizens have already paid into the system and in 2011 it will go to other states??

In March the NLC board met and Ray LaHood, secretary of transportation came to speak with us for about an hour. I know you are all aware that nationally our infrastructure is in crisis also. Secretary LaHood spoke to this issue. He made it clear that there is a commitment to improving the infrastructure at the federal level. He also made it clear that money would go to those regions that can provide the necessary match, those regions that are making a commitment to investing in their future. We have not shown that commitment.

I have been an elected official for 18 years, 12 years as mayor. I have lowered taxes and I have raised taxes. And I would certainly prefer to lower taxes. However, as leaders we have a responsibility to make the hard choices. As leaders, we study the issues and plan for the future of our state. That is what we are elected to do. This crisis will not go away, it will just get worse. After in depth study, the TF2 made a recommendation **18 months ago** to increase the fuel taxes.

I urge you to take leadership on this issue, to make the responsible choice, move these bills forward and invest in our future.