

Integrity of the Transportation Fund

The Wisconsin Motor Carriers Association (WMCA) is convinced that restoring the integrity of the Transportation Fund is the key to a solid transportation system in this state. We believe that strong measures should be in place to prohibit the use of money from the Transportation Fund for non-transportation purposes.

When heavy vehicle registration fees were increased by 30% (an increase of \$600 for an 80,000 pound combination) late in 2007, it was anticipated that the funds would be used for improvements in Wisconsin highways and bridges. Instead some of the funds were used for non-transportation purposes, bringing the total of diversions to \$1.3 billion over the last six years.

Governor Doyle has proposed shifting another \$140 million from the Transportation Fund in his 2009-2011 biennial budget. A total of \$55 million would be used over the two year period for "pupil transportation" through the Department of Public Instruction. Almost \$80 million would be transferred from the Transportation Fund to the General Fund.

While the WMCA is willing to support reasonable increases in transportation funding, we must emphasize that such support is predicated on the understanding that there will be no further transfers or other diversions of segregated user fees out of the transportation fund. Our first priority rests with restoring the integrity of the transportation fund and we urge you to embrace that commitment in the coming budget.

The trucking industry wants and needs good highways and bridges and they are willing to pay for them. They worry about the future of transportation in this state as congestion (particularly in the southeastern portion of the state) increases and debt service continues to mount. However, they question the wisdom of pouring more money into the "transportation bucket" as long as that bucket has serious leaks in it and the existing funds are being drained off for other purposes.

As you deliberate the 2009-2011 biennial budget, please keep in mind that Wisconsin now ranks in the top ten in the country for both fuel tax and registration fees paid by truckers. The problem is not low user fees; the problem is that the funds are not being used for transportation purposes.