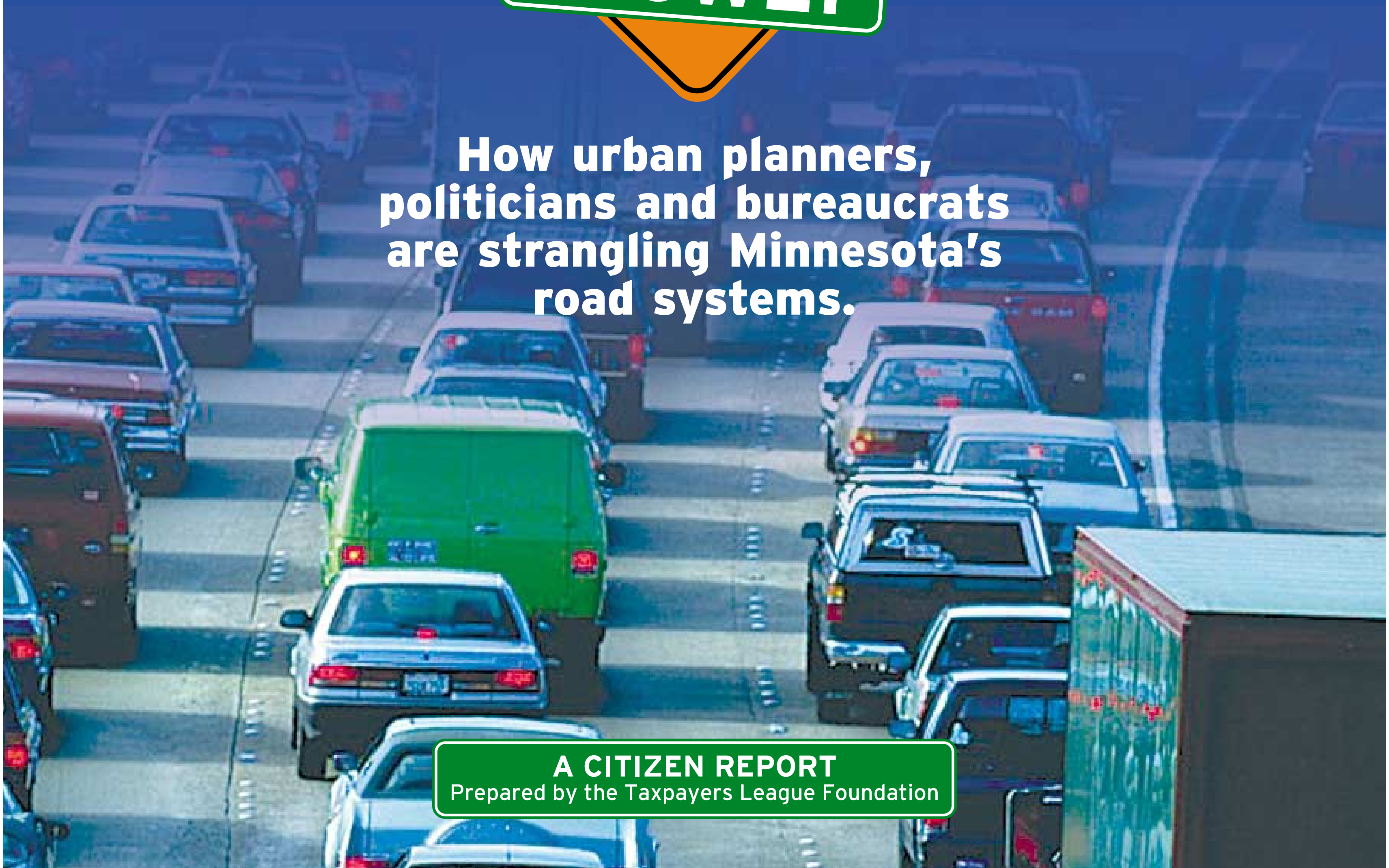
GOING NOWHERE SLOWLY



How urban planners, politicians and bureaucrats are strangling Minnesota's road systems.

A CITIZEN REPORT

Prepared by the Taxpayers League Foundation

It doesn't take an engineer to know that something is wrong with our transportation system.

Our highways are more congested than ever. Commute times are increasing every year. Everywhere we look, there is construction, but somehow the new and improved road system never appears.

Minnesotans need to know: what's wrong and how can we fix it?

Transportation funding doubles, Road capacity up only 2%

You may have heard in recent years that transportation funding has been shortchanged and that increased taxes are the way out of our traffic gridlock.

Did you know that over the past 10 years, transportation spending has increased by 109% – from $2.6 billion to $5.4 billion?

INCREASES SINCE 1992

TRANSPORTATION SPENDING	109%
TRAFFIC VOLUME	33%
NEW ROAD CAPACITY	2%

MN Dept. of Finance

The dramatic increase in spending has not translated into more road construction. While traffic volume has increased by 33% since 1992, road capacity only increased a miniscule 2%.

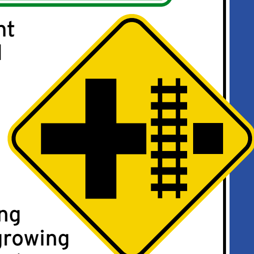
Obviously, increased funding alone is not enough.

Minnesotans pay 38% more in state taxes than the average American.

Source: US Census data

Current plans offer no congestion relief

It's obvious that Minnesota's increasing investment in transportation spending has not alleviated road congestion. More importantly, the plans on the drawing board will do almost nothing to ease congestion.



Minnesota spends only 11.9% of its highway money on road construction, ranking it 49th in the nation!

Fed. Hwy. Admin.

The reason why is simple: Minnesota's urban planners have decided against building enough roads to meet the growing demand. They have instead chosen a different path: changing the way Minnesotans live, work, and commute by forcing new development patterns on our communities.

Mass Transit: Costly and Inefficient

The reality is that mass transit cannot solve our traffic congestion problems.

Only 1% of all passenger miles traveled in the Twin Cities is currently carried by mass transit – almost entirely using buses.

Mass transit is costly for taxpayers. While automobiles cost taxpayers 5 cents per passenger mile traveled, light rail costs taxpayers $1.37 per passenger mile. The gas tax and user fees paid by drivers actually more than pay for the building and upkeep of the road system. Conversely, fares paid by riders account for a small fraction of the operating cost of the transit system.

COST OF TEN MILE TRIP TO TAXPAYERS

ACTUAL COST PER 10 MILE TRIP	
ROADS	$ 0.50
COMMUTER RAIL	$ 4.80
LIGHT RAIL	$ 13.70
USER FEE PER 10 MILE TRIP	
ROADS	$ 0.70
COMMUTER RAIL	$ 1.50
LIGHT RAIL	$ 1.40
TAXPAYER SUBSIDY PER 10 MILE TRIP	
ROADS	$-0.20
COMMUTER RAIL	$ 3.30
LIGHT RAIL	$12.30

Source: National Transit Profiles

PROJECT COST COMPARISON in millions

HIAWATHA LIGHT RAIL	$675
US HWY 212	$226
WAKOTA BRIDGE	$250
US HWY 52	$239
STATE HWY 100	$133

TRIPS PER DAY

HIAWATHA LIGHT RAIL	24,000
US HWY 212	140,800
WAKOTA BRIDGE	139,000
US HWY 52	41,600
STATE HWY 100	177,600

Mass transit carries few passengers. The Metropolitan Council and Mn/DOT are currently spending $675 million to move 24,000 people on the new light rail line in Minneapolis. They could have spent $848 million to enhance traffic flow and capacity on roads which carry 500,000 people every day. More car trips will be added each year to these highways than light rail will ever carry.

Population density is crucial for light rail and other transit investments to pay off. Cities with efficient rail and transit systems, like Tokyo, are much more densely packed than the Twin Cities. Tokyo, for instance, has nearly 10 times the population density of our metro area.

URBAN DENSITY people per square mile

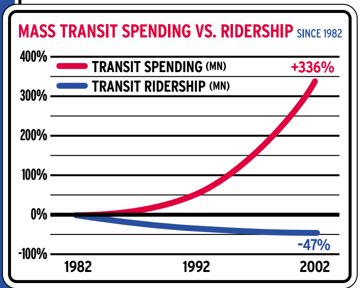
HONG KONG	73,600
TOKYO	18,400
PARIS	9,200
NEW YORK	5,400
CHICAGO	4,300
TWIN CITIES	1,960

Source: Demographia

Taxpayer cost for new transit riders per person:
Light Rail: **$11,300 a year**
Commuter Rail: **$5,400 a year**
Leasing a new Lexus LS430: **$10,400 a year**

Social Engineering: How Smart Growth = Dumb Planning

If you listen to the urban planners these days, people shouldn't be allowed to drive their cars. That's why you keep hearing so much about replacing our current transportation system with a **"multimodal"** one, including light rail (LRT), commuter rail, busways, and urban bikeways.



Source: U.S. Census and MN Senate Research

They call it **"smart growth."** It's a philosophy of city planning that promotes transit use and high density living, including cluster housing, apartments, and condominiums instead of single family homes.

If you believe the Metropolitan Council, suburbs are really just **"urban sprawl,"** and free flowing traffic is merely an invitation to city dwellers to move to the 'burbs.

Minnesota's roads have been shortchanged for one reason: the urban planners have decided to build fewer roads. Congestion has itself become a tool of the urban planners to force commuters to change their behavior.

The Metropolitan Council has recommended spending 70% of new transportation funds on transit instead of roads.

Source: Met Council 2025 Plan

"Even if a congestion-free highway system were possible, it would produce negative impacts on transit usage and this, in turn, would make it more difficult to serve transit-dependent people and provide an alternative to the automobile..."
— Metropolitan Council

This experiment in "**social engineering**" has failed. The results are clear: housing costs and land prices have skyrocketed and traffic congestion is worsening by the day. Families are getting priced out of the housing market, and parents are wasting hours in commutes.

Despite huge spending increases in recent years, transit ridership has plummeted to almost half of what it was in 1982.

Congestion has increased faster in cities with light rail than in cities that invested mainly in roads.

Source: US Census data

Clearing the Roadblocks

More and better roads. The only way to get there is through replacing the current leadership and implementing dramatic reforms to our planning and road building system.

Right now, it takes MnDOT 15 to 20 years to plan and build a road. Simply put, we can't afford to wait that long to address our growing congestion problem.

There are 74 Federal and State environmental laws governing road builders. 19 state and federal agencies regulate road construction activities.

Source: Minnesota Chamber of Commerce

The only way to solve our congestion problems is to put

Focus on solving the problem

Ramp meters, "sane lanes," light and commuter rail all fail to address the real problem Minnesotans face: traffic has increased much faster than road capacity. Our transportation planners need to quit wasting time on "solutions" which fail to address the problem.

Increase Funding for Roads and Issue Bonds

Over the next decade, more than $4.5 billion will be siphoned from car taxes to be used on transit and other projects. Raising the gas tax simply covers up this huge raid on our transportation funds, without even filling the gap. Issuing bonds is a quick and effective way to infuse cash into the system to buy right of way and other long-term investments.

Remove Roadblocks

Right now, Minnesota's roadbuilders face a myriad of obstacles. They must comply with over 74 environmental laws, deal with 19 state and federal agencies, and seek consent from every municipality involved before they can begin to lay pavement. It's time to streamline the road building process.

Set goals and deadlines to complete projects

The Minnesota Department of Transportation is spending more today than at any time in its history. Yet despite that fact, remarkably few construction projects that add capacity to the system will actually be completed in the near future. The state legislature and the Governor should set goals and deadlines for specific projects, or they never will be completed.

Taxes from Cars should go to roads

100% of taxes collected on automobiles are user fees and should be spent on building and maintaining the road system. Light rail, commuter rail, urban walkways, and bike paths will not relieve congestion and should not be funded from car taxes. The raid on car taxes will cost our highway system $4.5 billion in new funding over the next decade.

$4.5 Billion
Car taxes siphoned out of the road system into transit and the general fund over the next decade.

$1.8 Billion
New revenue if gas taxes are raised 5 cents a gallon.

Calculated from MN Dept. of Finance Data

Prepared and paid for by the
Taxpayers League Foundation
One Carlson Parkway · Suite 120
Plymouth, MN 55447
Phone: (763) 249-5950
Fax: (763) 249-5960
www.taxpayersleague.org