

Thanks for the invitation to come join you today to this joint meeting of the Minneapolis Chamber and the Downtown Council.

I'm not going to mince words. In fact, I'm not even going to work into this lightly. If you business leaders who really get the picture on transportation and transit issues don't weigh in urgently – and I mean URGENTLY – with the House and Senate, the moment to get business done on this important issue will be gone. And I mean GONE.

By the time this next biennial budget rolls around, transportation will be competing with health care, education, and all the other priorities that I've noticed the Legislature can't quite say "no" to. I tried this session to give them an out ... I said "keep it to bonding and emergencies and one quality job on transportation."

The one major proposal that I sent them was the hard work of many, many people to craft a long-term strategy for funding transit and transportation STATEWIDE with no new taxes. In fact, we figured out a way to do it with a PERMANENT TAX CUT – \$275 million worth by capping car tab fees at 75 bucks.

There are those who think that a solution can be delayed. They think a solution must rely on a gas tax increase. I'm here to tell you that the opportunity is now, but the obstacle is that it's an election year.

Because the House and Senate leadership is jockeying to see who can make the most people happy, they're spreading spending around like jelly on bread – so thin that everybody gets something but it doesn't really amount to much.

The same people will be back for seconds come next session. You know it's true. That's the pattern. It's the reason real reform may never happen in Minnesota.

Kiss it good-bye now because the ONLY thing that really matters to them is November.

It's a shame. A downright shame.

After all these years with no leadership over transportation, I think Minnesotans deserve better than thinly spread jelly in every spending area from K-12 education to nursing homes to child care subsidies.

You're too smart to take this pitifully poor substitute.

You know what the House transportation plan gets you? About as many paved miles on 494 as I can count on both hands. Who do they think they're kidding?

And the Senate

You business leaders understand that with a growing metro area we'll end up spending many, many times as much for roads as for transit if we neglect this problem even longer. As Congressman Oberstar said to me in Washington, we're going to choke on our own congestion. We cannot build our way out of this mess with roads alone.

To counter my administration's proposal for dedicated funding with one-time, small-change spending for only road construction is a sin.

Transportation is dying in the Legislature because of politics.

This transportation package has become personal. It's ridiculous, but that's what it is. So I need you to take over fighting for this proposal and make it yours – not mine.

Go over to the House and talk about this wonderful city you work in. Tell them this is one of the TOP TEN downtowns in America for the number of workers you have in the central business district. Of the 145,000 workers here, HALF use only transit to get to work. HALF.

Tell them a lot of those folks come in from the suburbs. They might even live in Republican districts. That's pretty important to the House leadership – they tell me they don't even know where Franklin Avenue is. It's been a big barrier to explaining why that light rail link is so very, very important to saving Phillips Neighborhood. They don't much care that 60 percent of the people who live in Phillips don't own a car to get to a job in.

But I bet you do.

You major employers understand the issues confronting our inner cities, and you also understand greater Minnesota.

Your branch banks and your Target Stores and your IBM plants are all over this great State.

I'm proud to tell you that we thought of that when we developed the long-term, multi-modal plan to connect our many regional economic centers with the Twin Cities. Of course we need a balanced system of different types of transportation to move people and goods.

Northwest Airlines needs regional airports. Commuter rail makes sense along the major traffic ways. Barge traffic is part of moving grains to market. And yes, we need roads that get us from A to B, too.

But it's not just about getting from Bemidji to St. Cloud. It's about building a system that moves us from Bemidji to Beijing. I'm going to Washington next week to testify about trade with China. In order to be a world competitor, we need a keen understanding of transit and transportation as a major tool.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I need you to help teach those people in St. Paul that the Capitol is not the center of the universe. It's just a dot on a very big globe. Many of you have traveled it in the course of your work, and so have I. But I think your voice is stronger than mine at this critical time when Minnesota's politicians are looking protectively at their own futures rather than yours.

I'll give you a good example.

In February, I led a delegation to Denver, where the Republican Governor and Republican Mayor proudly showed us their transit system. Sam Grabarski came along. Senator Carol Flynn came along. Representative Tom Workman wanted to come, but wasn't allowed to by his caucus. It was too bad.

He could have come back, in his leadership role as chair of Transportation Policy, and informed his colleagues about a city that shows us the future we want and need here.

In Denver, we saw what happens when the first line gets put in. The mayor warned me not to underestimate ridership because they did. Now they have a system linked with circulator buses – from Republican suburbs – bringing people downtown to jobs. The impact on their congestion has made believers out of the citizens there. They voted a BILLION DOLLAR referendum for transit last year. And they will be more than happy to take our federal money

dedicated right now to the Hiawatha Corridor line if and when the House Republicans succeed in undoing the job Governor Carlson started and I sought to finish.

Maybe one of them ought to have gone along when we went to Japan in October.

I had quite an experience leaving a Timberwolves game there. You know what it's like here. You get in your car, crawl out of the ramp, and then move two feet at a time for an hour through downtown to get home.

Not in Toyko.

Our bus flew to the hotel after the game because the people stepped on mass transit and cleared the area in a matter of minutes. Their traffic control system is remarkable.

Commissioner Tinklenberg and I watched them managing the entire system from the high tech control center that keeps commuters moving all across the city. And what are we doing here? Bucking against meters on a few ramps.

Let's face it – we're trapped in our cars. I'm convinced that's the plan. The legislature is going to keep tabs fees ridiculously high – and when you think about it, they're really even higher for the people in rural Minnesota as a percentage of income. They're obviously counting on a gas tax increase next year to get some real cash for transportation – which I have lost any enthusiasm for with gas prices where they are and the fact that we can get the job done right now without it.

The people of Minnesota understand this clearly. That's why a recent Star Tribune poll indicated that over 60 PERCENT of the citizens in this state support a total transportation and transit package.

We all know that a healthy state depends on healthy metropolitan areas and healthy rural areas in between. It's a vision we all share. It's the fodder for a lot of political speeches to preach and promise about healthy communities.

I believe that the state's job in that picture is about making those investments that no one community can afford. It's our job to make absolutely sure there's a strong, basic infrastructure that anybody can benefit from. I learned at Harvard University this winter that it's not our job as a State to pick winners and losers in this fast economy. That's YOUR job.

My job as Governor is to do the basics and do them well.

If you agree with me, join me now. Speak up. Ask your commuting employees to speak up. Ask your suppliers and customers to speak up. The time is now. Make your voices heard as an organization, as business leaders, and as taxpaying, commuting Minnesotans.

Thank you.

Good afternoon:

I want to thank you for inviting me to talk with you today. As business leaders, I know that there are a wide variety of issues that you are interested in – today, however, I want to talk with you about transportation.

As you know investment in our transportation infrastructure is essential to the continuing vitality of the economy in Minnesota. Unfortunately, Minnesota's investment in transportation has not kept pace with the demands of our surging economy.

Since 1980, employment has grown nearly 50 percent. During the same time, total vehicle miles traveled increased 79 percent, but public investment in the 1990s actually decreased as a percentage of the Gross State Product.

All of you know how important transportation is to business. You need workers to get to jobs – You need your products to get to market in a reliable predictable time frame.

It has been over fifteen years since a Governor proposed a balanced, statewide transportation plan. On January 10th, I changed that. I believe that the time for action is now. We have a unique opportunity. We can address our failure to invest in transportation without raising taxes. In fact, we can cut taxes and invest in our transportation. This is a unique opportunity that I believe we should act on now.

My transportation plan is founded upon four key principles.

The plan is long term.

The plan is multimodal.

The plan is statewide; and

The plan provides significant tax relief in the form of a tax cut for car tabs.

My plan calls for approximately \$245 million per year in new dollars for roads and bridges and also expands the current bus system. In addition, under my plan no one would pay more than \$75 for their car tabs. This is a tax cuts of \$275 million dollars.

Thus, under my plan we can invest in our transportation infrastructure without raising taxes. In fact, we lower them.

Despite the fact that we are at a historic time in our state, where we can invest in our transportation infrastructure without raising taxes, . . . and despite the fact that a recent Star-Tribune poll indicated that over 60 percent of the citizens of the state support this type of proposal, . . . despite all of that, both the House and the Senate are currently considering proposals that provide no long term funding. Instead, their proposal merely provide small one time, election year infusions of dollars into the system. These proposals will not address the system wide needs of our transportation system.

As you know, I am new to this political process, but I am continually amazed. Transportation leaders in both the House and the Senate with a straight face have indicated that they are really doing a lot for transportation this year – that it's a big year for transportation. Well I am here to tell you that it's not true.

If this is their idea of solving transportations problems, I am truly frightened to what their long term approach will be to tax reform, education funding, or other state issues that require a far sighted approach.

You know, I recently went to Denver to look at what they are doing with light rail transit and transportation. Denver is investing three billion dollars in transportation infrastructure over the next ten years. Ladies and gentleman, what Denver is doing, what St. Louis is doing, what Chicago is doing should be a wake up call to the Twin Cities. I was frightened. If we do not act we are going to be at a competitive disadvantage to these regions. As all of you know, we are competing in a global environment where our region competes against Denver, St. Louis, Houston, and the other economic centers around the United States. If we choose to ignore transportation . . . we do so at our own peril.

Finally, I want to say a few words about light rail. When I announced my transportation plan I said that it would be unproductive and a shame if legislators decided not to focus on long term solutions to transportation issues, but instead chose to refight the light rail votes funded with not one but two super majority votes made during the last two sessions. One under Republican Governor Arne Carlson and one under my administration.

Unfortunately, it appears that the House Republicans have decided to focus on light rail almost exclusively. Two years ago when Governor Carlson signed into law the initial \$40 million for LRT where were the critics. House Republican leaders have wasted precious time this session refighting two-year-old battles.

I believe that it is an exciting time for transportation and that together we can move forward on transportation to achieve a long-term multimodal transportation proposal that

I ask you, I urge you, I implore you to support my transportation plan and let your state legislators know of your support.

Thank you for inviting me today. I know that Commissioner Tinklenberg and Chair Mondale are here today and that we all would be more than happy to take some questions.