

Good morning. It's great to be here with all of you today.

We're here to talk about transportation-- something that has been one my top priorities since I took office.

As I am sure you know, early in my administration, I proposed a 10-year investment plan called "Moving Minnesota." I believed it was what the state needed when I proposed it two years ago, and I believe it is what the state needs today.

Minnesota needs a long-term, statewide plan that gives people choices. Roads and transit must be part of the solution.

To get there will take leadership.

Unfortunately, so far legislators don't appear up to the task. In response to the realistic and honest budget plan I put on the table, legislators offered shortsighted plans that don't even include inflation.

Let me also address the politicking going on related to the Northstar rail project.

The real issue that we need to focus on is whether or not Minnesota needs commuter rail and whether Northstar is the right project. The answer on both counts is "yes."

I am proud of the work Mn/DOT is doing on Northstar. It is a good project for the citizens of this state and it will remain a state project.

As I have said before, it's time to stop making excuses about transportation.

This is not about roads versus transit.

It's not about who's in control of the project.

It's not about reliving the tired light rail debate.

This is about being honest. It's about leadership. It's about what's right for Minnesota.

It's time to stop picking projects for political reasons.

We should do it based on need and the opportunity to solve transportation problems.

Northstar is critical, not only because it gives people in the fastest growing corridor in the state another choice, but because it takes people off the road, making room for those who choose to drive.

It is part of a bigger plan that links key regions and places in the state together. That's what Moving Minnesota is about too.

The ultimate success of Moving Minnesota is dependent on the commitment that Mn/DOT and its partners have made to "getting the job done."

I realize this has been no easy task. We've all had to face a lot of tough challenges in the midst of trying to do our jobs. Obviously the tragedies of September 11 have been part of that. But Mn/DOT has proven that it's up to the challenge.

I came into office talking about reform and that agency has delivered.

I believe in limited government and accountability and Mn/DOT has embraced these qualities.

As a recent headline put it, "Streamlining has become the latest buzz word at Mn/DOT."

The agency has focused on delivering what its customers want, based on the feedback it gets.

This is how government should operate and is what I've asked all state agencies to do.

Sept. 11 changed everything. It made us all think about what's important. It made us also understand the importance of safety and mobility.

So when it comes down to it, all this talk about politics and policies isn't really important.

What matters is that parents can take their kids to daycare, hospitals receive the supplies they need, ambulances can rush patients to the emergency room and workers make it home safely despite a wicked Minnesota storm.

You make this happen. This is what it's really about.

Thank you.