



## **McCoy: As state's economy grows, transportation needs also change**

By SEN. MATT McCOY  
SENATE DISTRICT 31

State Sen. Matt McCoy, D-Des Moines, represents District 31 in the Iowa Senate. The district includes parts of the city's west and south sides. He can be reached at 281-3371 or [matt.mccoy@legis.state.ia.us](mailto:matt.mccoy@legis.state.ia.us)

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A recent "road show" by members of the Senate Transportation Committee showed there is great public interest in improving the state's transportation system, including how it can better support local job creation.

Iowa has nearly 114,000 miles of highways, roads and streets. Nationally, our state ranks 12th in number of miles of roadways and fifth in number of bridges. These are parts of Iowa's transportation infrastructure that past generations built to help our state grow and prosper.

The transportation investments we've made in recent years, however, have not kept up with demand. In fact, at the rate we are going, we will have a \$27.7 billion problem over the next 20 years, including a \$4 billion shortfall affecting our most critical road infrastructure needs.

The reason Transportation Committee members visited nine communities and held meetings with more than 500 Iowans was to help find the answer to that problem. As our state's economy grows and changes, our transportation needs change.

For example, truck traffic has grown by 51 percent since 1990, in part because of the increased truck traffic required to ship corn to existing ethanol plants. This means more wear on the roads, safety concerns, and congestion as trucks queue to enter the plants.

Suggestions on how to pay for our transportation needs included raising the gas tax, increasing pickup fees, building toll roads, approving a statewide penny sales tax, and increasing license fees.

Attendees also had ideas for improving our transportation infrastructure, such as expanding rail traffic, developing new recreation trails, building regional airports, and improving locks and dams.

The "Transportation Road Show" did not uncover a magic answer to our budget problem. Legislators intend to keep working on this issue, though. That's why I welcome your ideas as we make our generation's contribution to Iowa's transportation system.