



## **Veto override good news for transportation**

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The state Legislature Monday made a significant step for improved infrastructure and transit by overriding Gov. Tim Pawlenty's veto of the transportation bill. It's the first override of any of Pawlenty's 37 vetoes. The vote in the House was especially close - the bill received 91 votes, and needed 90 in order to pass.

Overriding a veto is rare in this state. About 97 percent of vetoes in the last 150 years have been upheld. But in this case, the override was needed to break a 20-year standoff as infrastructure decayed.

The bill funds \$6.6 billion over the next decade through a five-cent per gallon gas tax increase, including state highways, bridges and local transit. It also includes an additional \$10 million for rural road safety and allows the state patrol to hire 40 more troopers.

The bill also increased Metro sales taxes by one-quarter percent for light rail and other Twin Cities initiatives. Other areas could approve up to a half-cent sales tax increase by voter consent to help fund other projects.

Republicans did not make the vote easy for the six representatives who broke ranks to pass the override. GOP proponents of the bill endured threats from Republican leadership over endorsement in some districts.

Those six Republicans should be commended for sticking with their judgment and not allowing partisanship to get in the way of fundamental priorities.

Of course, the bill should not have been controversial to begin with. Many other states, including some renowned for their conservatism fund transportation with little ado. In contrast, Minnesota's transportation funding has not increased significantly in 20 years, even as the cost of road building and maintenance continues to climb.

Tax increases are never popular, and should not be taken lightly. Fortunately, the tax should not empty pocketbooks, as the GOP alleges. If the average motorist drives 15,000 miles annually in a vehicle getting 18 miles per gallon, it will cost about \$42 a year - roughly 11 cents per day. Tax credits will also be available to offset the cost for low-income households. Additionally, the bill is expected to create up to 33,000 jobs annually for the next five years, according to the office of Rep. Brita Sailer (DFL- Park Rapids).

Transportation is not a luxury issue or a divisive social measure. It's the bread and butter our cities, states and nation run on, essential for the flow of goods and services. Kudos to the legislators for their courage to push through this forward-thinking bill.