

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Statement by WISPIRG Director Peter Skopec on Speaker Vos's Remarks that a Gas Tax Increase is Unlikely

*On Wednesday, Assembly Speaker Robin Vos [said](#) that lawmakers would "probably not" increase the state's gas tax in the upcoming biennial budget. WISPIRG Director Peter Skopec issued the following statement in response:*

"We welcome Speaker Vos's announcement that Wisconsin lawmakers are unlikely to raise the gas tax in the upcoming budget, and agree with Governor Walker's previously stated intentions to cut major highway program spending while increasing investment in infrastructure maintenance, particularly at the local level.

Simply raising the gas tax is not the solution to Wisconsin's transportation crisis. We have to take a hard look at where our transportation dollars are being spent.

First and foremost, this means applying greater scrutiny in considering which major highway expansion projects to green-light. It also means prioritizing urgent maintenance investments, and expanding public transit that connects people to jobs and businesses.

The speaker's announcement means that the upcoming budget debate will offer Wisconsin an important opportunity to reform our transportation spending priorities. Over the last 15 years, the state has [increasingly focused on costly highway expansion programs](#). More spending on these programs has meant a greater reliance on borrowing, and it has diverted funds away from upkeep of existing infrastructure. Before beginning construction on new expansions, we should be sure that they're really needed, and that less costly repairs wouldn't do.

Revisiting and revising proposed highway expansion projects that Wisconsin doesn't need isn't a silver bullet, but it would be a big step in the right direction. The Southeast Wisconsin Freeway Megaprojects Program and the Major Highway Program are a good place to look for savings, [as Governor Walker has rightly pointed out](#). An ongoing audit of the State Highway Program, commissioned in 2015 with bipartisan support in the Legislature and due out this winter, could help identify which projects ought to be scaled back to save taxpayer dollars and free up funding for more important infrastructure investments."

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*WISPIRG, the Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group, is a non-profit, non-partisan public interest advocacy organization that takes on powerful interests on behalf of its members, working to win concrete results for good government, public health and Wisconsin consumers.*