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DRIVE statement on transportation funding in proposed budget

(MADISON, WI) -- The members of **DRIVE** (*Devote Resources, Invest for a Vibrant Economy*) applaud both Governor Tony Evers and the Joint Finance Committee for their willingness to begin to address the needs of our crumbling roads and bridges in a meaningful way.

DRIVE is comprised of a diverse group of industries – including Agriculture, Tourism and Manufacturing sectors – that are all reliant on a quality infrastructure system. **DRIVE** was created in 2016 to bring key economic stakeholders together to support a long-term, bipartisan solution to Wisconsin’s transportation funding crisis that meets the needs of the entire state.

“Naturally our focus is on local road funding,” said JIM HOLTE, president of the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation and treasurer of **DRIVE**. “We believe both Governor Evers and JFC correctly prioritized rural roads as needing immediate attention. Rural communities are struggling with an 80-year replacement schedule which is not sustainable. These budget proposals for rural areas are desperately needed, but we would like to see the Legislature and Governor consider additional funding for rural roads later this session if state tax collections remain strong.”

“Tourism is a multi-billion-dollar industry for Wisconsin,” added TOM DIEHL, president of Tommy Bartlett, Inc. in the Wisconsin Dells and president of **DRIVE**. “Our tourism industry relies on a strong transportation system and this is a first step in a long process of funding our transportation system. This budget doesn’t solve the transportation funding problem, but, it is a meaningful step in the right direction. The Tourism industry was willing to support increased user fees to ensure out-of-state visitors paid their fair share for improving our roads, but we are pleased this budget reduces the state’s reliance on bonding which had more than doubled in the past decade.”

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PAGE 2-2-2-2 DRIVE applauds transportation budget (continued)

STEVE BAAS, Milwaukee Metropolitan Association of Commerce, agrees.

“The importance of keeping the Southeastern Wisconsin mega-projects on schedule and restarting the engineering work on Interstate 94 East-West, which is a critical link between the Marquette and Zoo Interchanges, is a massive win for the three pillars of Wisconsin’s economy: Agriculture, tourism and of course, manufacturing,” said Baas, who also serves as **DRIVE** vice president. “We appreciate the efforts by both Governor Evers and JFC on this budget process.”

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***DRIVE** coordinates and implements a legislative advocacy strategy to enact a sustainable, long-term transportation plan that will keep Wisconsin's economy strong. Members express their concerns to policymakers on a regular basis.*

***DRIVE** is co-chaired by Tom Diehl, co-owner of Tommy Bartlett Incorporated in the Wisconsin Dells; Steve Baas, Senior Vice President of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Chamber of Commerce and Jim Holte, President of the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation.*

*For more information on the **DRIVE** COALITION, please visit our website at:
www.wisconsinndrive.com*