



KEITH RIPP

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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REP. KEITH RIPP'S RESPONSE TO WISDOT 2017-19 BUDGET REQUEST

Madison, WI – Rep. Keith Ripp (R-Lodi) issued the following statement in response to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's 2017-19 budget request:

"WisDOT's budget request is disappointing but not surprising. Governor Walker has been very up front about his expectations for this transportation budget. Unfortunately, those expectations are putting Wisconsin's economy at risk. This proposal ignores the significant impact project delays will have on safety, reliability, and our budgets in the future.

"I appreciate Secretary Gottlieb and Governor Walker for their focus on local roads. As a legislator in a mostly rural district and a former town supervisor, I have seen the very real struggle our towns and municipalities face when trying to budget properly for road maintenance, and this local aid increase is a start in relieving that issue. However, the request fundamentally lacks a genuine long-term solution.

"As stated in the request, 'revenues to the Transportation Fund, while increasing, are not growing fast enough to fully support the state's share of improvements to the highway infrastructure.' Knowing this funding crisis exists, our first priority should be to find a sustainable plan. Simply put, we cannot delay projects forever.

"The request goes on to state that 'bonding, with debt service funded by the Transportation Fund, enables the State to continue key investments without significant transportation user fee increases.' I agree that bonding can play a small part, but it cannot be the entire solution. In the current biennium, Wisconsin will pay a projected \$717.4 million in transportation fund-related debt service. I see nothing in this request to suggest that we are looking at ways to avoid adding to that number in coming biennia.

"Last month, I wrote a letter to Governor Walker asking him to keep all options on the table. I sincerely hope he will take that request to heart, and I look forward to working with him and my colleagues as we move toward a long-term solution."

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