

LOCALNEWS

Borderland roads, bridges included in governor’s proposal

If approved by the Legislature, Dayton’s plan involves improving 2,200 miles of roads and 330 bridges statewide

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Several roads frequently traveled by Borderland residents and visitors are included in a list of more than 600 road and bridge improvements that would be completed if the Minnesota Legislature approves Gov. Mark Dayton’s proposed investments in transportation.

The list details more than 2,200 miles of state roads and 330 bridges that would be repaired, replaced or expanded over the next 10 years under the governor’s proposal.

Projects in Koochiching and western St. Louis counties included in the governor’s list are:

- Three bridges on each Highway 217, Highway 6 and Highway 65.
- Highway 11, two miles from west junction with Highway 332 to International Falls; and three miles from the east junction with Highway 332 to County Road 20.
- U.S. Highway 71 five miles from Itasca-Koochiching county line to one mile north of Highway 1.
- U.S. Highway 53 in St. Louis County 18 miles from Cook to Orr; and 17 miles from Orr to Kinmount Creek.

The governor’s plan would invest \$6 billion over the next 10 years to address the state’s highway funding deficit, invest \$2.35 billion in local government transportation projects, and provide \$2.92 billion for metro and greater Minnesota transit systems. The governor said in a news release his proposal would create an estimated 119,000 new jobs, and build the infrastructure necessary to meet the demands of a growing population and an expanding state economy.

“Minnesotans rely on these roads and bridges every day to get to work, bring their kids to school, and get their goods to market,” said Dayton in a news release. “If we fail to act, the condition of these roads only get worse. I urge all Minnesotans to

review this list of projects and decide for themselves whether these investments are worth making.”

Dayton said his transportation plan would bridge the \$6 billion state highway transportation funding gap over the next 10 years by raising new dedicated revenues for roads and bridges. It would also increase revenues for transit.

New funding for road and bridge construction would be provided by a 6.5 percent gross receipts tax on gasoline, raising the current 1.25-percent base tax on vehicle registration fees to 1.5 percent, and raising car registration fees by \$10. The governor’s plan also requires the Minnesota Department of Transportation to generate efficiencies of 15 percent from all new revenues, allowing the department to do \$6 billion of work for \$5.38 billion in new funding.

More than half of Minnesota’s roads are more than 50 years old, and 40 percent of the state’s bridges are more than 40 years old. In just the next three years alone, one in five Minnesota roads will pass their useful life. And in the next 10 years, nearly 40 percent of the state’s roads will be past their useful life, said the release.

Projects included in the list released are based on the recommendations of MnDOT. In selecting pavement and bridge improvements, the release said MnDOT gave priority to projects that would extend the life of roadways and bridges beyond the current 20-year State Highway Investment Plan. MnDOT used the following criteria to select the projects included in the list:

- Fixing roads in urgent need of repair – Priority was given to projects that would reduce the total miles of roadway statewide that have no remaining service life (meaning they are in very poor condition, and in need of repair). Over the next 10 years, roughly 4,370 miles of roadway on the state system will have zero remaining service life.



FILE PHOTO

The governor’s transportation plan includes improvements to several roads and bridges in Borderland.

- Making longer-term fixes on currently-planned projects – Instead of just making temporary fixes that would need to be repaired again in just a few years, this list of projects includes upgrades of currently-planned projects to make sure those repairs last longer, and would extend the useful life of more Minnesota roadways.
 - Preventing problems before they happen – Projects were included in the list released that would provide for preventive maintenance that would reduce the need to do longer-term work in the near future. By preventing further deterioration, these new investments would forego the need to perform costlier fixes down the road.
 - Strategic expansion – The list also includes projects that make targeted investments in key freight routes across Minnesota that are important for business expansions, job creation, and economic development.
- Local road improvement projects – funded with help from the state, but chosen by local governments – are not included on the list released. Dayton said more than 40 percent, or \$2.3 billion, of the new revenues raised in the proposal would be directed to cities, counties, and townships; giving local leaders the resources and flexibility to repair and replace roads and bridges statewide. These new investments would add hundreds of additional road and bridge improvements in communities across Minnesota.

LITTLEFORK CITY COUNCIL

Council meets new county sheriff

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

The Littlefork City Council got a chance to meet Koochiching County Sheriff Perryn Hedlund Thursday, when the new sheriff stopped by the meeting to introduce himself.

City Administrator Sonja Pelland said some members of the council hadn’t met the sheriff yet, so he came to the meeting to discuss any questions the council may have had. Pelland said Hedlund plans to occasionally attend future city council meetings throughout Koochiching County.

Hedlund also talked with the council about Littlefork-specific issues, Pelland said, including speeding issues in the city limits, weather siren needs and the radios used by the city’s ambulance and fire departments.

Another guest at the meeting, John Mattonen of JPJ Engineering, shared plans for the city’s upcoming water/sewer project. Pelland said bids for improvements outlined in the plan should be let in May.


Prior to the project, the city’s sewer lines will be cleaned and televised by Ritter & Ritter Inc. of Aitkin starting on April 15. After the lines are cleaned, Pelland said the city can determine the scope of the improvements.

In other business, Pelland reported to the council court orders for the repair and demolition of two Main Street buildings owned by Gail Haugland had been signed, and an agreement had been reached on a timeline for the project. It will be complete by June 15, with the irreparable parts of the buildings removed and the rest repaired.

Brian Lindvall, a member of the All School Reunion committee, requested help from the council in closing parts of Third Avenue on June 26 for a street dance. He also requested a portion of Third Avenue be closed from June 25-27 for a parade and 5k race for the All School Reunion.

Pelland said letters will be sent to the county Highway Department and Minnesota Department of Transportation to obtain permission to close the streets.

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