

# SEMscope

A quarterly publication of SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments

Winter 2007



## A citizens' guide to transportation funding

30 critical questions that you need  
to know the answers to

# SEMscope

## **SEMCOG**

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*SEMscope is a quarterly publication of SEMCOG*  
ISSN#03071-1310

**Cover photo:** It is a critical time for Southeast Michigan. A lot of issues need to be addressed. One of the most important is that of transportation funding. How should roads and transit be funded in the future? In order to answer that question, everyone needs to understand how the region's transportation system is currently funded. The simple answer is that the system is funded at the gas pump every time we buy a gallon of gas. But, it is much more complicated because that revenue isn't enough to meet the needs of an aging transportation system. This special issue of *SEMscope* is a must read. It answers these very tough questions. This photo was taken in Southwest Detroit on November 21, 2006.

*Preparation of this document was financed in part through grants from and in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Transportation with the assistance of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.*

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## Making tough transportation choices

*“The average driver contributes about \$280 in gas taxes to the region’s transportation system. That’s less than \$1 a day! Your favorite cup of coffee probably costs more.”*

We all use it. We all complain about it. The truth is, Southeast Michigan’s transportation system is the backbone of our region. It enables each of us to live where we want; to get to our job; to regularly visit family and friends; and to go to the sporting, cultural, or recreational activity that excites us.

We all use it. We all complain about it. And we all take it for granted.

Our transportation system is large and complex. It wears down and deteriorates. And it costs a lot to maintain and improve.

But, all of us have a vested interest. If we want a high quality of life in this region, if we want our economy to compete — if we want to be able to enjoy all of the good things that Southeast Michigan has to offer, we must invest in our roads, bridges, and transit.

Most everyone thinks they pay too much tax. But, do you know how we pay to maintain Michigan’s roads? Do you know how much you pay?

Michigan roads are funded primarily through the gas tax...the tax that you pay every time you buy a gallon of gas. Unlike the sales tax, which increases along with the price of the item purchased, the gas tax remains the same no matter the price per gallon at the pump. So, fuel taxes are based on the number of gallons purchased, not on the price per gallon. Even though you may think you’re contributing more because the price of gas is high, you’re not. The gas tax rate has remained static for 10 years. There has been just one fuel tax increase in 24 years. How many times has the price of milk gone up in 24 years?

The average driver contributes about \$280 in gas taxes to the region’s transportation system. That’s less than \$1 a day! Your favorite cup of coffee probably costs more.

This is such an important topic at such a critical time in our history that it is the focus of this issue of *SEMscope*. Everyone who uses Southeast Michigan’s transportation system needs to understand it better. Southeast Michigan residents need to understand the facts. Only then can we address the problems and seek potential solutions.

As the region’s planning agency, SEMCOG plays an important role in Southeast Michigan’s transportation decisions. SEMCOG prepares the long-range transportation plan for the seven-county region. This document guides the region’s transportation decisions for at least 20 years into the future. It assesses current and future conditions and needs, estimates how much it will cost to maintain and improve the system, and figures out how we will pay for these improvements. We know it will cost much more to maintain and improve our transportation system than the dollars that are available.

We have some tough choices ahead of us. We’re sure you have questions. We hope that the rest of this issue will answer them.

# Funding

## The facts about Southeast Michigan's transportation system

### 1. We all love our cars. How has this affected the Motor City's transportation legacy?

Like most Americans, Southeast Michigan residents love their cars. That love may be a bit more passionate here because this is where the auto was born. And because there are not many other options to get where we need to go in our region, we have an even greater dependence on the automobile than some of the other major cities. Here's the breakdown:

- Detroit – 93 percent drive; 2 percent use public transportation,
- Chicago – 82 percent drive; 8 percent use public transportation,
- Boston – 83 percent drive; 8.4 percent use public transportation, and
- Washington, D.C. – 81 percent drive; 9.1 percent use public transportation.

These numbers should come as no surprise since Southeast Michigan does not have a rapid transit system. Chicago, Boston, and Washington, D.C. have greater transit options. Because Southeast Michigan lacks this option, **we have a disproportionately high number of cars on our roads.**

### 2. How big (and important) is Southeast Michigan's transportation system?

**There are over 23,000 miles of public road in Southeast Michigan.** That's a lot of miles! In fact, you could drive from New York to Los Angeles eight times and still not have logged 23,000 miles. That is a lot of asphalt and concrete to maintain and manage. We have more miles of public roads than many other states.

And while we all need roads to get to work, to run our errands, to visit family and friends, and to have fun, our transportation system is equally important to business and the overall economy of Southeast Michigan and the entire state. Goods must be delivered to markets, parts to factories. If the road is in disrepair, we may get to work late. If the road is in disrepair, a business depending on just-in-time delivery may suffer.

### 3. How many vehicles travel on our roads?

There are 3.4 million licensed drivers in Southeast Michigan who drive four million vehicles on the region's roads. That doesn't include an additional 200,000 passenger vehicles that travel through our region each day.

These vehicles travel a lot of miles – 140 million of them every day. That's a big number to grasp. It is nearly 50 million miles to Mars, so we travel the equivalent of going to Mars three times every day! When that daily number is multiplied for an entire year, the number is huge. Motorists traveled 48.8 billion miles in 2005.

**That's a lot of wear and tear on our roads.**



# Funding

## The facts about Southeast Michigan's transportation system

### Q 4. What about congestion?

A At any given time, Southeast Michigan has about 1,000 miles of congested roads. This number is expected to grow to 1,500 by 2030.

What does this mean for your commute? It means you're probably frustrated a lot. It currently takes us an average of 26 minutes to get to work each day, an increase of three minutes since 1990. Why? More of us are driving and driving more trips. Further, our region continues to spread out. We've moved further away from our jobs – 31 percent of workers in Southeast Michigan commute to jobs that are outside the county in which they live. So, we all spend 30 minutes more each week in our cars; that adds up to 26 more hours every year.

**We can't build our way out of congestion. But, without any improvements, time wasted in traffic jams will only increase. It's not good for you. It is not good for our economy. It makes maintaining and improving our transportation system critically important.**

### Q 5. What is the life expectancy of a road?

A How long does a car last? How about a stove or a refrigerator or a water heater? All have a shorter life expectancy than a road.

A reconstructed road can last up to 25 years, while resurfacing that road will last roughly 10 years. **Since most of our transportation system was built in the 1960s, it now needs to be rebuilt.**

*More of us  
our driving  
and driving  
more trips.*

*Further, our  
region continues  
to spread out.*





# Funding

## How we pay for our transportation system

### 6. How much does the average motorist spend on gasoline every year?

The “average” motorist travels about 15,000 miles per year in a vehicle that averages 20 miles per gallon. If gas is \$2.50 per gallon, then he/she spends \$1,875 on gas annually. The number changes, of course, with fluctuating gas prices. That breaks down to about 13 cents per mile traveled.

### 7. What is the gas tax?

The gas tax is the main source of revenue used to maintain and improve our region’s roads. This is included in the cost of a gallon of gas. [It is important to note that income taxes, property taxes, and sales taxes are not used for roads.]

For every gallon of gas that you pump into your car – no matter what the price at the pump for that gallon – a set amount in state and federal taxes goes for road improvements.

The state gas tax is 19 cents per gallon, deposited in the Michigan Transportation Fund. The federal gas tax is 18.4 cents per gallon, deposited into the Highway Trust Fund. **In total, over 37 cents of the price of every gallon of gasoline goes into these funds to maintain our transportation system.** If you drive more miles and buy more gas (or if you drive a gas-guzzler), you pay more gas tax. This system is based on use.

### 8. How much do I contribute to the gas tax?

Using the numbers quoted in the answer to question six above, that “average” motorist would use about 750 gallons of gas per year. If those gallons are multiplied by the tax that is paid on every gallon (37.4 cents), that motorist pays less than two cents per mile or \$280 per year in gas taxes to maintain and improve the region’s roads and

support our bus system. Remember, this is the main revenue generator to maintain and improve our transportation system.

This is a very small price to pay to use our road system! To compare, if you buy one large coffee at Starbucks every work day, you would spend \$429 annually (at \$1.65/cup). How about cell phones? If your monthly cell phone plan is \$60, each year you’re spending \$720. Three of the hottest items during the 2006 holidays were Playstation 3 (\$600), Nintendo Wii (\$250), and Apple iPod 80GB (\$350). How many of those did you buy?

Given these comparisons, the total amount we each contribute to something as large and as important as our region’s transportation is quite small. Given the state of our economy, every dollar is important. However, **in order for our region to attract business, maintain a high quality of life, and ensure a vibrant future, more money needs to be spent on Southeast Michigan’s transportation system.**

### 9. What are some of the challenges we face in how we fund our transportation system?

There are two important factors. One, each year it costs more to maintain and improve our transportation system. Why? The cost of construction and other materials continues to rise. The cost of road construction rose more than 14 percent in 2005.

Two, Michigan’s gas tax has not kept pace with these rising costs. It has not even kept up with inflation. In fact, **Michigan’s state gas tax has remained at 19 cents since 1997.** State (and federal) legislators have not been supportive of increasing taxes for transportation.



# Funding

## How we pay for our transportation system

### How Michigan compares to our neighbors in gas taxes

Pennsylvania	– 32.3 cents
Wisconsin	– 30 cents
Ohio	– 28 cents
Minnesota	– 20 cents
Illinois	– 19 cents
Michigan	– 19 cents
Indiana	– 18 cents

### 10. What if the gas tax had kept up with inflation?

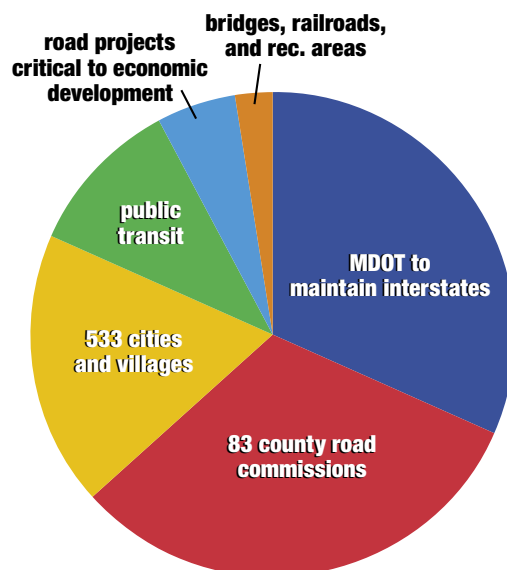
Even though gas prices have risen significantly over the past few years, our state's gas tax has remained static.

**If the gas tax had increased along with inflation since 1997, it would be at 23.1 cents today.** This four-cent increase (or \$30 annually per vehicle) would mean an additional \$200 million annually for the state or an additional \$2 billion over the past 10 years.

### 11. Is there any other fee that contributes to transportation system improvements?

Yes. Every time you purchase a vehicle or renew your license plate tabs, you pay a state fee that goes toward road repair and maintenance. This vehicle registration fee is based on the price of your vehicle. With gas-tax revenue-growth flat or negative when adjusted for inflation, **the vehicle registration fee, which has been steadily increasing as vehicle prices rise, now provides 45 percent of the contributions to the Michigan Transportation Fund.**

### Breakdown of Michigan's 19-cent gas tax



### 12. How does Michigan's gas-tax rate compare with other states?

Compared to other states, **our 19-cent state gas tax is fairly low. It ranks 42nd out of the 50 states.** The chart in the margin shows how Michigan's 19-cent gas tax ranks with some of our neighboring states.

### 13. How is our 19-cent gas tax used to maintain roads in Michigan?

- 6 cents is used by MDOT to maintain interstate freeways (\$300 million annually),
- 6 cents is spread among the 83 county road commissions (\$300 million annually),
- 3.5 cents is split by 533 cities and villages (\$170 million annually),
- 2 cents is dedicated to public transit (\$100 million annually),
- less than 1 cent goes toward road projects critical to economic development (\$37 million annually), and
- 0.5 cent supports bridges, railroads, and recreational areas (\$24 million annually).

### 14. What am I buying with my gas-tax dollars?

It may not always be apparent, especially when sitting in traffic on the way to work or when driving on a pothole-filled road, but our region has made great strides over the past several years to improve the existing transportation system.

Here are some significant facts. First, and possibly most important, our roads are safer. In 2005, there were 7,600 fewer traffic crashes than in 2004, and nearly 40,000 fewer than in 2000. Over the past four years, there has been other progress:

- 547 miles of pavement were resurfaced, reconstructed, or rehabilitated,
- 447 bridges were replaced or repaired,
- 80 miles were widened,
- 183 miles of new nonmotorized facilities were constructed,



## How we pay for our transportation system

- traffic signal improvements were made along 298 miles of roadway, and
- 557 large and small buses were purchased.

As a result of these improvements, the transportation system is improving. Pavement conditions on all roads are assessed annually. From 2004-05, conditions on 33 percent of roads improved; 42 percent stayed the same; and 25 percent got worse.

We are operating our system more efficiently. Traffic signals are being retimed. The Freeway Courtesy Patrol provides safety and security on our freeways, and helps alleviate delays caused by stranded motorists, accidents, and abandoned vehicles. In 2005, 28,359 stranded motorists were assisted, saving 9.2 million hours of delays on freeways.

We are spending tax dollars wisely. We are making progress. But, the reality is that Michigan ranks 44th in the country in spending on roads (on a per capita basis). There is no question that **for progress and improvement to continue, we need more money.**

### 15. How much federal money do we receive for our transportation system?

Everyone who buys gas for a vehicle contributes 37.4 cents per gallon in taxes. The federal gas taxes (18.4 cents per gallon) that we pay come back to us and are used by the state, county road commissions, and individual cities and villages.

Unfortunately, Michigan receives back only 91 percent of the gas taxes that we pay to the federal government. Michigan contributed about \$1.15 billion to federal coffers in 2004, but received \$1.03 billion back. **That makes us a donor state. We need to make this situation more equitable.**

### 16. What needs to be done to receive federal funds?

Before any transportation project can receive federal funds, it must go through a series of

steps, or federal requirements, to ensure that public money is well spent.

For instance, if a local community asks for federal funds for a transportation project, the project must first be submitted to their county's Federal-aid Committee (the group charged with recommending federal funding projects to SEMCOG). Each county in Southeast Michigan (plus the City of Detroit separately), in turn, makes a list of all the projects they and their communities are planning and pass them along to SEMCOG. In St. Clair and Washtenaw Counties, the list of projects is prepared by the St. Clair County Transportation Study (SC-COTS) and the Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS). Working through SEMCOG, local elected officials evaluate each project's merit and then decide which ones are most important for the region to receive federal funding.

It is also important to know that the federal government generally pays for a part of the cost of transportation projects. The remainder is the responsibility of state or local governments.

**If you, as a citizen, want to shape and influence regional transportation policy, you need to voice your opinion early and often where projects initiate – at the local level.**

### 17. Are state and federal funds expected to increase in the future?

No. Several factors are at play here. First, future revenues from federal funding will substantially decrease by 2010-2011 unless the federal gas-tax is increased. Second, state revenue – generated by the gas tax and vehicle registration fees – is not keeping up with the rising costs of maintenance and construction. While motorists are driving more, cars are more fuel-efficient, so therefore, they are consuming less fuel. The erosion of gas-tax revenues is a direct result.

**What this means is that we must find other ways – ideally, a mix of revenue sources – to support our transportation system at higher levels.**

*To shape and influence regional transportation policy, you need to voice your opinion early and often where projects initiate — at the local level.*

# Funding

## The cost to improve our system



### 18. How much does it cost to...

- **resurface a two-lane road?** About \$2.6 million to resurface one mile of a two-lane road.
- **widen a road from two to five lanes?** About \$6 million to widen one mile of a road from two to five lanes.
- **rebuild a six-lane freeway?** About \$9 million to rebuild one mile of a six-lane freeway.
- **install and operate a traffic signal for one year?** Between \$50,000 and \$100,000.
- **fill a pothole?** The Road Commission for Oakland County says that, depending on the size, location, and complexity of the pothole, the cost can range anywhere from \$400 to \$2,000.

### 19. Why don't we have toll roads?

Historically, toll roads have been unpopular in Michigan, but are among the options being explored to increase transportation funding. **Alone, this option doesn't raise enough money to solve all of our problems, but in combination with other options, could be part of the solution.** There are instances of toll roads and toll lanes being used across the country to both reduce congestion and increase revenue, with new technologies enabling efficient toll collection.

### 20. I don't ever use transit. Who uses it? What do I pay to support transit?

Public transit is another important part of our region's transportation system. While only two percent of trips in Southeast Michigan are made using public transit, it provides mobility to those without automobiles and to those who choose not to drive.

Nowhere do fares alone cover the entire cost of public transit. Transit service requires government subsidy. Currently, two cents of the state gas tax, along with local millages (SMART, AATA), and contributions from some community general funds support the region's transit systems.

Public transit received nearly \$71 million for capital projects and operating costs in 2005. That amount of money doesn't buy a lot of service and especially doesn't get us the higher-quality rapid transit that other parts of the country enjoy. **Any improved transit will require each of us to pay more.**

### 21. Bridges, like roads, are an integral part of our overall transportation system. What's the status of bridges in the region?

Simply, they are old, getting older, and in need of repair. There are 3,551 bridges in Southeast Michigan. Unfortunately, 1,164 bridges are currently considered in need of repair and 50 percent are over 30 years old. It is estimated that by the year 2030, 2,880 bridges will be deficient. We will need \$7.2 billion to fix all of our region's bridges.

## The cost to improve our system

On the positive side, the number of deficient bridges decreased by seven percent over the last five years. **However, there is not enough money to address all of our deteriorating bridges.** For obvious reasons, bridges need to be structurally safe and reliable. As a driver, you wouldn't want to risk your life or the lives of your loved ones on an unsafe bridge.

Without regular maintenance, bridges fall into disrepair, may need to be closed, or may not support the extra weight of trucks, buses, or ambulances. When a bridge is closed, travelers are forced to seek alternate routes that can be miles out of the way. With each closed bridge, driver travel time, congestion, and pollution increase. Perhaps most importantly, bridge closures have a negative effect on response times for emergency services, such as fire or ambulance. In any emergency, you would want the fire truck or the ambulance to take the fastest route to your house, wouldn't you?

### 22. Trucks destroy the roads. Why don't they pay more taxes?

First, trucks play an important role in our region. Each day, 409,000 trucks travel in Southeast Michigan, bringing goods to meet our daily needs and fuel our economy. It is true that trucks weigh more than cars and, therefore, cause more damage to the roads. Michigan allows the heaviest trucks, but also requires for more axles, making the per-axle weight consistent with other states.

Trucks pay less fuel taxes but more licensing fees than automobiles. The issue of equity or inequity has been debated by experts on both sides and by the legislature for years. **The discount that trucks currently enjoy (4 cents less per gallon on diesel fuel than taxes paid on gasoline) must be carefully examined as we look for ways to increase transportation funding.**



### 23. Why does it feel that as soon as road repairs are complete, orange barrels seem to sprout up again?

Many agencies are now using an asset management approach to maintaining and improving the road system. That means that we assess road conditions regularly. The investment that we make periodically over the life of the roadway extends the life of the pavement and postpones the need to make a large improvement that requires a large investment. Often, this means investing in roads that may still look good instead of waiting for roads to look worse.

You are not alone in recognizing the reality that some roads seem to be under construction often. That pothole on the recently reconstructed road is a harsh reminder. It is important to realize that **some improvements are short-term fixes – for five years or so – just enough to last until we have the money available to make a longer-term fix.**

*Any improved transit system will require each of us to pay more.*



# Funding

## What needs to be done?



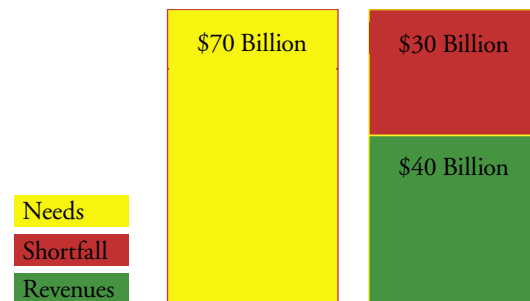
### 24. Why do I need to pay more money for transportation? How does paying more taxes help our region?

From today through 2030, our region will need nearly \$70 billion in total transportation costs. At this time, federal, state, and local governments calculate about \$40 billion in available revenue. Here's how that money will be spent:

- repave or reconstruct 6,200 miles of road,
- repair or replace 1,100 bridges,
- operate 2,000 miles of existing transit routes and various paratransit services,
- construct 45 miles of turn lanes,
- widen 290 miles of existing road,
- build 19 miles of new road,
- retime 6,500 traffic signals,
- improve 1,800 intersections, and
- construct 100 miles of nonmotorized paths.

That said, there is still a \$30 billion shortfall! **The consequences of not closing this gap will affect every motorist and transit rider in Southeast Michigan.** We will see worsening road and bridge conditions, increases in congestion, limited transportation choices, and stymied economic development. Everyone's quality of life will be impacted. Our region will fall farther behind the rest of the country. Our goal to be a world-class region will be in jeopardy.

### Financial shortfall



### 25. What factors are impacting the gas tax?

Improving fuel efficiency, alternative fuels, hybrid vehicles, and recent federal legislation that mandated an increase in fuel economy standards for SUVs all point to great progress for our environment and quality of life. But, success in these areas will mean less gas-tax revenue. While these factors will have a positive impact on our future, they also need to be a wake-up call for all of us now. **We have to become less reliant on gas taxes to fix our roads.**

### 26. If less revenue from gas taxes is the wave of the future, how will we fund road and transit improvements?

Great question. You get it! **In the short term, we must increase the state gas tax,** look for new revenues through state-enabled local taxes and fees, and explore partnerships with the private sector.

**In the long term, we'll need stable sources of revenue that can efficiently raise enough revenue to address our many urgent transportation needs.** These could include user fees

## What needs to be done?

that assess a charge on the use of the roadway system based on mileage and time of day so that motorists more directly pay the true cost of using the roadway system. Here are some possible options being considered:

- We need to educate professional and business groups and generate more revenue locally. To that end, Oakland County and the Oakland County Business Roundtable are researching an additional revenue proposal that would impose a four-cent local gas tax, a half-percent local sales tax, a 20-percent increase in vehicle registration fees, and adjustment of driver's license fees to a flat rate of \$25. The revenue raised could amount to about \$155 million over 10 years. It would go into a "congestion fund" that would stay in Oakland County to address local needs. Other counties could do the same.
- Partnering with the private sector could offer an additional option for future revenue. In 2004, a private consortium leased the rights to run the Chicago Skyway for the next 99 years. This consortium agreed to pay the City of Chicago \$1.8 billion, which the city will use to pay the Skyway debt, create a long-term reserve, and generally improve financial conditions.
- The City of Seattle has passed a 20-year/\$1.8 billion local tax package.
- The State of Indiana is raising \$3.8 billion by leasing the Indiana Toll Road.
- The State of Oregon is exploring a fee proposal based on the number of miles driven rather than on the amount of gas pumped. This proposal is only in the pilot phase and has supporters and critics. Is it perfect? No. It does, however, recognize that the gas tax will not be an adequate source of revenue in the near future.

### **27. When I travel out of state, roads are better. Why?**

There are several contributing factors:

- Our roads were built earlier and are older.
- We have more miles of public road than many other states, requiring more maintenance.
- As mentioned earlier, Michigan is a "donor" state for federal funds; we contribute more in federal gas taxes than we get back.
- Michigan invests less in roads than other states. Many of our neighbors – Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin – pay more in taxes.

### **28. Besides paying more taxes, what else can I do to help improve our transportation system?**

Our transportation system would be better if more money was available to state and local governments. There are also other ways to improve the system. However, most would require lifestyle changes on the part of Southeast Michigan residents. For example:

- sharing a ride to work by participating in carpools or vanpools with co-workers, family, or friends;
- consciously planning trips (the term "trip chaining" means running multiple errands on a single trip);
- living closer to work; and
- using transit whenever possible.

## What needs to be done?

*Only through a motivated and well-educated community can our region be successful in tackling these challenges.*

### 29. What are the next steps?

Hopefully, after reading this special issue of *SEMscope*, you have a better understanding of how our transportation system is funded. You understand how important the transportation system is to our economic vitality and quality of life. You understand the critical issues facing us in the future, that our needs will continue to outpace our ability to address them. And you agree that we must fund the system differently and, in doing that, increase revenue.

Please share what you've learned with family, friends, and elected officials. Only through a motivated and well-educated community can our region be successful in tackling these challenges.

There is no single magic fix to Southeast Michigan's transportation challenges. But these are the realities:

- **We can and will continue to improve how efficiently we invest in our transportation system – a system that includes both road and transit.**
- **There is a need to raise our state's gas tax and/or find another source of revenue for roads and transit.**
- **Yes, this increase is needed at a time when our economy is struggling.**

### 30. What can SEMCOG do?

SEMCOG commits to the following:

- Engage with other partners in a public education campaign on the need for short-term fixes as well as long-term revised revenue strategies to ensure the future of our road and transit systems.
- Work with road and transit operators to most efficiently spend our transportation dollars.

- Advocate with elected leadership in Lansing on the critical role our transportation system plays in state and regional economies as well as our quality of life, leading to actions to address the shortfall in revenues.
- Advocate with our elected leadership in Washington, D.C. for a higher-than-90-percent return on federal gas-tax revenues.

### The final word....

What are you willing to do? Pay a little more in taxes at the gas pump? Drive a little less? Drive at off-peak times to avoid congestion? Use the bus when it's available?

Voice your concerns to our policy makers. Contact information for these elected officials follows on the next page.

Voice your concerns to us as well! As we're sure you'll agree, we've presented a lot of important information here. Now it's your turn. We want to hear from you. To share your feedback concerning the future of our transportation system, how we will fund it, and other issues in *SEMscope*, please visit our Web site at: [www.semcog.org](http://www.semcog.org).



**U.S. Senators: [www.senate.gov/general/contact\\_information/senators\\_cfm.cfm](http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm)**

Sen. Carl Levin – (202) 224-1388

Sen. Debbie Stabenow – (202) 224-2822

**U.S. Representatives: [www.house.gov/writerep](http://www.house.gov/writerep)**

Rep. Tim Walberg - District 7 (Washtenaw County) – (202) 225-6276

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**Michigan State Elected Officials**

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Michigan State Senators: [senate.michigan.gov/SenatorInfo/find-your-senator.htm](http://senate.michigan.gov/SenatorInfo/find-your-senator.htm)

**Road Agencies**

City of Detroit Department of Public Works - [www.ci.detroit.mi.us/dpw](http://www.ci.detroit.mi.us/dpw)

Livingston County Road Commission - [www.livingstonroads.org](http://www.livingstonroads.org)

Monroe County Road Commission - [www.mcrc-mi.org](http://www.mcrc-mi.org)

Road Commission for Oakland County - [www.rcocweb.org](http://www.rcocweb.org)

Road Commission of Macomb County - [www.rcmcweb.org](http://www.rcmcweb.org)

St. Clair County Road Commission - [www.sccrc-roads.org](http://www.sccrc-roads.org)

Washtenaw County Road Commission - [www.wcroads.org](http://www.wcroads.org)

Wayne County Department of Public Services - [www.waynecounty.com/dps](http://www.waynecounty.com/dps)

**Transit Agencies**

Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA) - [www.theride.org](http://www.theride.org)

Blue Water Area Transit (BWAT) - [www.bwbus.org](http://www.bwbus.org)

Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) - [www.detroitmi.gov/ddot](http://www.detroitmi.gov/ddot)

Detroit Transportation Corporation (People Mover) - [www.thepeoplemover.com](http://www.thepeoplemover.com)

Lake Erie Transit (LET) - [www.lakeerietransit.com](http://www.lakeerietransit.com)

Livingston Essential Transportation Services (LETS) - [www.co.livingston.mi.us/lets](http://www.co.livingston.mi.us/lets)

Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) - [www.smartbus.org](http://www.smartbus.org)

**Federal, State, and Regional Agencies**

Federal Highway Administration, Michigan Division (FHWA) - [www.fhwa.dot.gov](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov)

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) - [www.fta.dot.gov](http://www.fta.dot.gov)

Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) - [www.michigan.gov/mdot](http://www.michigan.gov/mdot)

St. Clair County Transportation Study (SCCOTS) - [www.stclaircounty.org/offices/metro/transportation.asp](http://www.stclaircounty.org/offices/metro/transportation.asp)

Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS) - [www.miwats.org](http://www.miwats.org)

## Mission

SEMCOG's mission is solving regional problems – improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the region's local governments as well as the quality of life in Southeast Michigan. Essential functions are:

- providing a forum for addressing issues which extend beyond individual governmental boundaries by fostering collaborative regional planning, and
- facilitating relations among local governments, educational institutions, and state and federal agencies.

As a regional planning partnership in Southeast Michigan, SEMCOG is accountable to local governments who join as members. Membership is open to all counties, cities, villages, townships, intermediate school districts, community colleges, and universities in Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties.

## Responsibilities

SEMCOG's principal activities support local planning through SEMCOG's technical, data, and intergovernmental resources. In collaboration with local governments, SEMCOG is responsible for adopting region-wide plans and policies for community and economic development, water and air quality, land use, and transportation, including approval of state and federal transportation projects. Funding for SEMCOG is provided by federal and state grants, contracts, and membership fees.

## Decision making

All SEMCOG policy decisions are made by local elected officials, ensuring that regional policies reflect the interests of member communities. Participants serve on one or both of the policy-making bodies – the General Assembly and the Executive Committee.

Prior to policy adoption, technical advisory councils provide the structure for gaining input on transportation, environment, community and economic development, data analysis, and education. This deliberative process includes broad-based representation from local governments, the business community, environmental organizations, and other special-interest citizens' groups.

*“All SEMCOG policy decisions are made by local elected officials, ensuring that regional policies reflect the interests of member communities.”*

## SEMCOG

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