

## **Funding for roads must come sooner, not later**

Summary: Less talk, more action needed to put dent in big shortfall

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The old saying that you get what you pay for is painfully evident when it comes to paying for the roads we drive on every day in the fast-growing Treasure Valley.

Last week a group that has been researching Idaho's transportation needs for the last two years made recommendations to city, county and state officials at a meeting in Boise.

The Forum on Transportation Investment said funds are not keeping pace with transportation needs. Transportation officials said that while the recently established GARVEE bonding program will quicken construction of some projects statewide, GARVEE does not alleviate a substantial annual funding shortfall that is predicted for the next three decades. The total projected amount needed during that period of time? \$20 billion.

"Idaho currently is not investing enough money in our transportation system to meet the needs of today and tomorrow," Nampa Mayor Tom Dale said during the Aug. 16 meeting. "The message is very clear. The state of Idaho has growing transportation needs that are currently being underfunded."

Forum members said they found no single revenue source could be counted on to adequately address both state and local transportation needs. Their analysis found that multiple sources would be necessary to come close to meeting funding requirements.

Recommendations to help offset the funding shortfall include increasing all fuel tax fees and all vehicle registration fees as soon as possible, as well as increasing motor vehicle-imposed fees to cover the cost of providing the services.

Such ideas make sense. After all, motorists who want, need and clamor for better roads ought to be willing to help pay for them.

Other recommendations include eliminating or replacing the revenue impact of tax exemptions for alternative fuels such as ethanol, biodiesel, hydrogen and electric fuels.

All of these recommendations should be seriously addressed and decided on. And the sooner the better. If we wait to act sometime "down the road," we may end up finding ourselves "up a creek." Our view is based on the majority opinions of the Idaho Press-Tribune editorial board. Members of the board are Stephanie H. Pressly, publisher; Vickie Holbrook, managing editor; David Woolsey, assistant managing editor; Jake Alger, opinion page editor; Laura Stewart, circulation director; and community representatives Sandra Nosik of Caldwell, Terry Hathaway of Middleton, and Drew Mayes and Sisilia Raass of Nampa.