

# NEWSCLIP

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## Letters

### Our state roads are riddled with safety concerns

Dear Editor,

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Understandably, the recent bridge disaster in Minnesota has brought renewed focus on safety concerns related to deteriorating infrastructure. The Illinois Department of Transportation will conduct extensive inspections of critical bridges, as directed by Gov. Blagojevich.

Bridges are just one part of the system's overall safety, and it's unfortunate that only a catastrophe like the one in Minnesota can bring public attention to the imperative of maintaining infrastructure in general. More than 1,000 lives are lost every year on Illinois highways, a total that can be reduced with adequate funding. In 2005, a crash occurred somewhere in our seven-county region about every one minute and 46 seconds, with a fatal crash every 17 hours and 50 minutes. Deteriorating roads lead to more crashes, which lead to more congestion, which in turn yields more crashes.

In addition to safety, there are many other reasons the State of Illinois is long overdue to invest in the transportation system as a whole. The Chicago region's continued economic success depends on our ability to maintain and expand roads, transit, freight, and other necessary infrastructure.

Residents spend an estimated 253 million hours per year in traffic delays, consuming 151 million gallons of fuel. A total of \$4 billion is wasted annually on fuel and productivity due to congestion. Without new investment dollars, we risk losing our competitive advantage just when we need it most — as the City's Olympic bid moves forward and as the global economy grows less forgiving.

Since last December, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning has

been urging the governor and General Assembly to pass a new capital program for the state. The last such initiative expired in June 2004.

Recently, I joined the chairmen of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry and Will counties in signing a letter to Gov. Blagojevich calling for new capital infrastructure spending.

With such broad, bi-partisan consensus supporting the proposed capital program, now is the time for the governor and the General Assembly to act decisively.

Gerald Bennett, CMAP Board Chairman  
Mayor of Palos Hills

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