

Statement on the Need to Renew and Replenish the Transportation Trust Fund  
And to Increase Local Aid  
Presented to the Assembly Transportation and Independent Authorities Committee  
By Honorable Liz Lempert, Mayor of the Municipality of Princeton and  
Member, NJ League of Municipalities Executive Board

Thank you, Chairman Wisniewski, for giving me the opportunity to discuss New Jersey's transportation infrastructure funding crisis. It is an honor to represent the League of Municipalities before this Committee.

Over the past few months, you have heard testimony from League Past President and Transportation Trust Fund Committee Chair, Mayor Tim McDonough, from TTF Committee Member, Mayor Robert Jackson of Montclair, from League President, Mayor Brian Wahler of Piscataway, and from a number of other concerned local officials. I do not believe it is necessary to repeat the statistics that underscore how vital the DOT Local Aid program is for local governments and, more importantly, for our taxpayers.

You already know that the majority of New Jersey's roads and bridges are maintained by local governments. You already know that that a failure to invest in our infrastructure jeopardizes public safety, our economic vitality and the security of our communities.

Regardless of whether you believe we are already in a crisis, or whether you believe that the crisis remains in the distance, there is no doubt that a solution must be found for the TTF. The case has been made, and the case is clear: the Transportation Trust Fund needs to be replenished.

This funding supports the infrastructure that allows our workers to get to their jobs, our children to safely get to their schools, emergency response personnel to quickly respond to emergencies, commerce to move efficiently and effectively, and local budget makers to provide tax relief to our residents.

The League has identified three objectives that we ask that the Legislature and Administration meet:

- 1) The authorization the Transportation Trust Fund to ensure adequate and reliable funding to meet State and local transportation infrastructure funding needs for the next 10 years;
- 2) An increase in Local Aid funding to ensure adequate and reliable funding to meet all local transportation infrastructure needs; and
- 3) Increase the municipal share of Local Aid funding and ensure fair funding for all municipalities.

Let me put this in more pragmatic terms. Over 550 municipalities operate on a calendar year budget. Last Friday, March 13, was the deadline for these municipalities to introduce their budgets. Final budgets are to be adopted by April 24.

So, as we speak the final touches are being put on municipal budget plans, with the knowledge that the Department of Transportation has advised us to anticipate no awards of local transportation funding.

The funding may not be there, but the need to ensure the safety of our local roads will remain.

We have called on State policy makers to take decisive action now on this crucial State priority. We repeat that call today. We cannot continue kicking the can ever further down the road. Given the urgent need for road repairs, the can can't last much longer.