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## Lack of revenue delays road projects

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Of The Oakland Press

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A dozen bridge repairs and road projects in Oakland County are being eliminated due to continued declines in state gas tax revenues and Michigan's inability to match federal funds.

The project cuts in Oakland begin next year under a five-year program by the Michigan State Transportation Commission that was approved by the Michigan Department of Transportation.

"We must invest in transportation to jump-start Michigan's economic recovery," said Rep. Pam Byrnes, D-Chelsea, chairwoman of the House Transportation Committee.

"These cut projects represent critical improvements that impact every community in Michigan," she said. "We must take action now to ensure a stable source of revenue to invest in modernizing Michigan's transportation system."

The 243 canceled projects include 128 bridge replacements and rehabilitations, 105 road rehabilitations and reconstructions, eight new roads and two capacity improvements.

Without the ability to match federal aid, Michigan's return on the federal gas tax will drop from a 92 percent return to just 50 percent in 2011.

"This is another example our road funding is inadequate in Michigan," said Road Commission for Oakland County spokesman Craig Bryson.

"We (the Oakland road commission) anticipate by 2012 that we'll also have to give back federal funding we're entitled to because we won't be able to provide the local match," he added.

Eight bridge and four road projects were eliminated in Friday's announcement.

"We're already one of the worst off economic states in the union, and we're going to get slammed again," Bryson said of the potential loss of federal funding for road and bridge repairs. "The solution is to raise the gas tax."

Projects cut in Oakland County include:

Reconstruction of 0.265 miles of Rochester Road (M-150) from Second Street to University Drive; Bridge improvement on M-59 at the Crooks Road interchange; A 5.9-mile widening of Old 59 (Auburn Road) from Adams Road to Dequindre Road; An 8.6-mile resurfacing of US-24 (Telegraph) to I-75;

Bridge removal of I-96 eastbound over GTW Railroad (abandoned); Bridge removal of I-96 westbound over GTW Railroad (abandoned); Bridge replacement of I-96 eastbound and westbound over pathway abandoned GTW Railroad; Overlay of 0.79 miles of M-59 eastbound over GTW Railroad;

Overlay of 0.79 miles of M-59 westbound over GTW Railroad;

A 0.359-mile bridge replacement of Crooks Road over M-59;

Superstructure repair of Trowbridge Road over GTW Railroad; and

Bridge replacement of US-24 over Clinton River Road.

"Michigan's dire funding situation has left MDOT with no other choice than to make drastic cuts and provide only the basic level of services to our residents," said Mike Nystrom, vice president of government and public relations for the Michigan Infrastructure and Transportation Association and co-chairman of the Michigan Transportation Team.

"The persistent underfunding of Michigan's transportation system jeopardizes economic growth and limits job creation in sectors such as agriculture, tourism and manufacturing, which are heavily reliant on quality roads, bridges and transportation infrastructure," Nystrom said.

The commission's approval of the five-year plan comes just two days after Byrnes and Rep. Richard Ball, R-Laingsburg, introduced revenue bills to help resolve Michigan's transportation funding crisis.

The bipartisan package of bills (House Bill 5768-70) is aimed at restructuring Michigan's motor fuel taxes and follows the recommendations of the Transportation Funding Task Force to address Michigan's critical funding needs.

Between 2011 and 2014, the package of bills would increase transportation revenues by \$1.4 billion and also allow the state to capture more than \$2.46 billion in matching federal aid.

## **FYI**

Michigan residents can voice their concerns about road funding by calling a toll-free number, 888-719-3087. The caller should then enter a five-digit ZIP code to be connected with a local legislative office.

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