



ANNUAL REPORT 2017

Transportation for Illinois Coalition

Dear Members:

2017 proved to be a difficult year for transportation, with the unexpected shift of transit funding onto the road fund, along with cuts to transit and state and local roads. The difficulty in achieving adequate transportation investment for the past three years was tied to the operating budget challenges for the broader Illinois state budget.

Despite the transportation funding setback in 2017, policymakers did take action to begin to address the operating budget challenges by increasing the income tax and approving an annual budget, and it is the hope of coalition leaders and members that these actions by policymakers in 2017 will pave the way for increased focus on the unmet needs in transportation.

TFIC is committed to working on a weekly basis with policymakers in 2018 to provide them the background and the support they need to advocate effectively for development of sustainable, increased funding for transportation. Though real action on this issue will likely not take place before 2019, the lessons learned the hard way in 2017 and the work of the coalition in 2018 will lay the groundwork for ultimate success.

Jennifer Morrison, TFIC Managing Director

MISSION AND VISION

Mission Statement

The Transportation for Illinois Coalition is the recognized authority on and unifying voice for transportation needs in Illinois. TFIC exists in order to achieve the best transportation systems in order to guarantee economic success.

Vision

The Transportation for Illinois Coalition identifies issues and aggressively advocates policy to secure maximum and sustainable federal and state funding for the transportation needs of Illinois.

How to Become a Member

Membership in TFIC is open to organizations, associations, unions, local governments, regional groups, and chambers of commerce from throughout Illinois. Any organization with members who realize the importance of transportation to Illinois jobs and the economy is encouraged to join.

Contact TFIC staff at 217-572-1272 or jennifer@filson-gordon.com or Bill Frey, TFIC Membership Chair.

STATE HOUSE COMMITTEE

The State House Committee found events outside our control necessitated a change in focus from the goals adopted for 2017. Illinois entered FY 18 in July 2017 without a budget for the third year in a row. As in the past, TFIC advocated for the passage of an IDOT-only budget bill because IDOT's budget does not affect the General Revenue Fund. Unfortunately, this year the shutdown of road projects could not be avoided. With the House and Senate close to a budget resolution, road projects shut down for a week in July until a new budget was passed.



The new budget brought good news for transportation, as well as the rest of the state, but also brought new setbacks for transportation. To cover a General Revenue Fund (GRF) shortfall, the FY 18 budget required the Road Fund to back some transit debt service previously backed by the GRF and also reduced some transit funding. TFIC made contact with legislative leadership in the weeks leading up to the budget deal in an attempt to prevent the cuts to transportation, but was unsuccessful.



Responding to the challenging political climate, TFIC executed new strategies to advocate for the state's transportation needs.

- Lobby Day and Virtual Lobby Day: For the first time TFIC held a second lobby day—this time via webinar—to educate the many people in the transportation construction industry in Illinois about where the budget and transportation funding stood and to encourage them to take part in discussions with elected officials. As in the past, about 100 people attended our lobby day and our virtual lobby day saw 200 people participate.

- As the dust cleared after the budget deal, TFIC members met to review what had happened and how it had been possible that cuts to an already decaying transportation infrastructure were considered palatable to policymakers. The group realized that, due to turn over in the legislature, traditional legislative advocates for transportation no longer were members and there was a need to address this lack of institutional knowledge and advocacy in the General Assembly membership. In July and August, TFIC began identifying legislators with a special interest in learning more about transportation issues and leading future policy discussions around transportation. The second half of the year was spent meeting with interested legislators, explaining the need for greater institutional knowledge, and developing the first in a series of educational presentations for elected officials.
- Finally, TFIC launched in the fall of 2017 a new social media strategy focused on educating the public about the importance of transportation infrastructure to Illinois and the nation. Content demonstrating the historical importance of infrastructure, new infrastructure design projects, today's significance, and some of the challenges facing our infrastructure today started going out daily through TFIC's Facebook and Twitter accounts. Although the accounts started with a small audience, that audience has grown throughout 2017.



Grassroots Network

TFIC's efforts over the past several years could not have been possible without the commitment of many in our grassroots network. This year, the State House Committee awarded the inaugural "Friends of Transportation" awards to grassroots team members who went above and beyond in 2016 to help in our education and advocacy efforts.



FEDERAL AFFAIRS

President Trump's promise of a new infrastructure funding bill and some of the uncertainty around a new administration kept the Federal Affairs Committee busy in 2017.



DC Fly-In

TFIC members joined their colleagues from across the nation in DC in May 2017 to advocate for robust infrastructure funding. TFIC heard from the Illinois delegation about their hopes for an infrastructure bill.

In the face of growing support within the administration for a bill reliant on public private partnerships and state and local investment, members also underscored the importance of a robustly funded bill that would help to rebuild the nation's infrastructure, rather than focus only on single projects that could attract private investment.

Ongoing Communications

In addition to TFIC's annual meetings in DC, members met with Congressman Kinzinger in district to hear about the Congressman's infrastructure priorities and provide information about the state of Illinois' infrastructure.



"Thank you for an amazing week in DC. We all make a great team!"

REFLECTING ON 2017, LOOKING FORWARD

Illinois has been faced with numerous challenges over the past three years and TFIC is proud of the work we have done to minimize the impact of Illinois' challenges on its transportation infrastructure. In 2017, the pressures from the many crises facing the state of Illinois built up to a breaking point and transportation lost some ground. The challenges of 2017 did, however, encourage TFIC and our members to develop a creative, ambitious plan to better position infrastructure funding in state legislature discussions going forward. We end 2017 with frustration over the lost opportunity but a firm resolve and hope for the future.