**Draft Letter for Policy Makers**

When it comes to taxes, it is my honest opinion that transportation infrastructure is one of the BEST investments we can make. I want to explain why I think that and I hope this will open a constructive conversation about the current state of our infrastructure funding.

Let’s get right to it, we have heard the news about gas tax increases, but what does that mean for you? When we break down gas tax increases, if we double the state gas tax, it equates to an additional $8.84 a month, likely less than we spend on coffee and certainly less than a meal from a restaurant. If we were to adequately fund road, bridge, transit, rail and air improvements the average Illinois resident would pay an additional $20 dollars a month. Which would bring the monthly cost for state transportation infrastructure funding to $45.75. That increase comes to an additional 67 cents a day, or total $1.53/ day.

Now what will we get with this increase? We will be able to restore comfort and safety to many of our roadways, save you money on the wear and tear of your vehicles, and boost the Illinois economy. When it comes to state investment, there is no better return on money than investing in infrastructure. It benefits every one of us.

I understand that people may think that we should wait for the federal government to see if they will increase Illinois’ transportation funding. Illinois has done a tremendous job of using the state funds we have to draw down as many federal dollars as is possible. Unfortunately, because of that, Illinois wouldn’t be able to benefit from a federal increase without first doing our part to raise funds for the state match. What that means is that if the state does not raise funds for infrastructure, you will be paying more money but will see none of the benefits.

Some people would say that we should cut waste first, and I agree with that. But let’s examine what the state is spending transportation funds on. Transportation funding is separated from the general revenue funding and IDOT staff and construction is all supported from this separate and smaller revenue source. Because of this, opportunities for waste are limited and when we look at the IDOT bureaucracy we can see how lean it is. Since 2003 there has been a 33% decrease in head count at IDOT and still the agency has had to shift operating funding to address construction needs. We shouldn’t be asking our transportation department to choose between salting the roads, and fixing the pot holes that are intensified by the ice. However, that is what IDOT is having to do in order to keep us as safe as possible.

I don’t want you to think that I am not sympathetic to the financial burden that you are feeling. I do hope that you will consider importance of this investment and the benefits that it holds for you, your family and your community. We simply cannot afford to wait any longer to invest in infrastructure.