

Transportation. Real solutions... not 19th century ones.

We put up with two basic seasons in Minnesota: Winter and Road Construction. But some people in Saint Paul consider the phrase "road construction" to be repulsive. Their idea of transportation is to bring us a 19th century solution to our traffic problems: Trains.

I have taken light rail in a number of cities when I travel. For example, getting around in Washington DC actually makes sense using the subway. But one of the biggest reasons to use the Metro in DC is because they have made it next to impossible to drive there, and incredibly difficult (and expensive) to even park. And to make matters worse, the DC Metro is heavily federally subsidized. Because of the way the District of Columbia is funded, the rest of the country pays for and continually subsidizes that Metro system.

When President Eisenhower began building our country's Interstate highway system, it all but rendered the rail system (in terms of public transportation and mass transit) to the ways of the telegraph or gramophone.

Light rail in Minnesota is slow, does next to nothing to relieve congestion on the freeways, and requires ongoing taxpayer dollars to operate. The Hiawatha line only moved people out of the buses they were riding and gives travelers from out-of-town a cheap way to get downtown or to the Mall of America, while leaving Minnesota taxpayers to pick up the tab. The Central line just increased the size of the leech on the taxpayer's wallet. In 2015, our two lines cost over \$42 MILLION in public subsidy to operate. With an average annual cost increase of 6% to maintain service (TRIPLE inflation or CPI), how can ANYONE say this is "sustainable"?

Let's face facts. Over the past 20 years, more businesses are locating in the suburbs. My own employer (Fortune 100-level) has built 2 towers in Edina/Minnetonka. The true growth in commercial buildings and jobs is within one mile of the 494/694 beltway, and continues to expand away from the core cities. Building a rail system into the downtowns, where actual growth is minimal, isn't actually about transportation.

Minnesotans want a transportation system that works, not new-urbanist engineering.

Investing in roads and bridges, not light rail, brings immediate benefits. It gets people home faster, not wasting time in traffic jams. It moves freight faster, saving labor costs. It reduces car accidents and injuries, caused by snarls and back-ups. It reduces overflow traffic onto feeder streets, improving neighborhood safety and increasing pavement lifespans. And it saves energy, but not wasting gasoline either idling or in start-'n-stop traffic.

Light rail does nothing to reduce traffic congestion. Light rail is permanent and inflexible. Light rail doesn't adjust for changes in traffic patterns or needs.

And is NorthStar rail a solution? No, not really. While NorthStar actually DOES have an impact on congestion, it's the preverbal drop-in-the-ocean. Rather than spending the millions and millions on NorthStar to help the congestion, why not...deal with the congestion problem by actually building some lane miles at a fraction of the cost per commuter mile? It's like putting a band-aid on your finger while your forearm is cut to the bone. And always remember, just like light rail, NorthStar will be attached to the taxpayer's wallet, subsidizing itself into the foreseeable future.

We can do better, we can spend more wisely, and we don't need more taxes to do it. We need leadership that isn't afraid to look things in a new way. I made it work in Mound...I can make it work in Saint Paul.