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## M.I.T.A. AGAIN CALLS FOR AT LEAST \$1 BILLION TO FIX 'RECORD BREAKING' POTHOLES

The Michigan Infrastructure and Transportation Association has been telling anyone that would listen that [Governor Jennifer Granholm](#)'s plan to add \$150 million in state spending to fix roads isn't enough since the day she announced the proposal in late February. On Thursday, MITA reiterated that it would take at least \$1 billion in additional funding in fiscal year 2008-09 just to scratch the surface of the state's transportation needs as officials spoke to the House Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee.

Ms. Granholm is calling for a total of \$3.424 billion in the appropriations for the Department of Transportation, a boost of 2 percent over the current year's funding. That level would also put Transportation funding at \$19 million over the amount allocated in the 2006-07 fiscal year.

The additional \$150 million is part of an economic stimulus package that is slated for 34 projects that the governor says could generate 2,100 construction jobs.

But even with the increase in the executive recommendation, the money spent on transportation falls short by an average of \$700 million for state roads and at least \$2 billion for local roads, said Keith Ledbetter, MITA director of legislative affairs.

At a time when Michigan is "facing the toughest pothole (season) on record," the state needs to up its spending instead of exposing the transportation budget to "a death by a thousand cuts," he said.

The \$150 million will bind roads over, Mr. Ledbetter said, but can't replace the need for billions more in funding.

If appropriated, the additional \$1 billion, would be split between the department, counties and cities, which all have "significant needs far beyond" the governor's proposal, MITA officials said.

Even with 10 times more road funding than in the governor's economic stimulus proposal, counties and municipalities especially would only have enough money to "Band-Aid" the roads they are responsible for maintaining, which represent 110,000 of the 120,000 roads in the state, said Mike Nystrom, MITA vice president of government and public affairs.

Subcommittee Chair Rep. Lee Gonzalez (D-Flint) spoke in favor of adding more money to the budget, saying all lawmakers have seen the problems with potholes in their district, adding that he's learned that "when you're in a hole, you shouldn't dig deeper."

But [Rep. Richard LeBlanc](#) (D-Westland) said that even as he receives numerous complaints from constituents about the condition of the roads, he has yet to encounter anyone who wants to pay higher gas taxes, the main recommendation MITA has given to raise more revenue.

[Rep. Pam Byrnes](#) (D-Chelsea) said she never thought she'd become a "MITA groupie" but this time around she agrees with the group's position and with the idea of raising the state gas tax.