



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P. O. Box 7882 Madison, WI 53707-7882

For Release: March 28, 2019

Contact: Rep. Don Vruwink, 608-266-3790

Our Roads Must Keep Up With the Times

By State Representative Don Vruwink

Those of you who are Baby Boomers like me and grew up on a gravel road might remember riding to grade school on a tractor and hay wagon like I did during a wet spring. Those days no longer exist, but the condition of some of our roads are beginning to resemble what I remember in the late 1950s and early '60s.

We as a state cannot afford to let the condition of our roads deteriorate to the condition they were when I was a growing up. The economy of our state is different than it was 60 years ago, when every house in the countryside had a barn and cows. Now farms are few and far between.

Today Wisconsin's economy depends on three main things: tourism, manufacturing, and agriculture. Among the factors that businesses look at when deciding where to locate is access to safe roads and how fast they can get their product to market.

As a high school history teacher, I taught my students the adage "Time is money." That saying is as true as ever in today's competitive business world. I know a manufacturer in Whitewater who won't send their product down Highway 89 because the roughness of the road damages the product. They now take alternative routes, which adds to their costs and thus to the customer.

When I travel some roads in the 43rd Assembly District, I don't have to worry about the speed limit because if I went the speed limit, it would cost me in car repair.

AGRICULTURE: Wisconsin has a \$342 billion economy, ranking 11th in the United States. Agriculture contributes about \$8 billion to it. As a member of the Governor's Dairy Task Force, I learned that hauling milk over poor roads reduces the quality of the milk at a time when there is no profit in producing milk. Wisconsin 200-plus dairy plants depend on cost-effective shipping and distributors.

TOURISM: Last week I attended the Governor's Conference on Tourism as a member of the Assembly Tourism Committee. There I learned that tourism generated nearly \$21 billion for the state economy in 2018. One in 13 jobs in our state is attributed to tourism. It is estimated that each Wisconsin household would pay an additional \$660 to maintain our services if it were not for the taxes collected from our visitors. Research shows Wisconsin is a drive-too state for tourists. Good roads are necessary to give visitors a pleasant experience. Let's keep the tourists coming.

MANUFACTURING: Manufacturing accounts for about 19 percent of the state economy. It employs 16 percent of our workforce and contributes over \$8 billion to our economic output. Getting raw materials and finished products to and from destinations is essential to growing the economy. Fixing the roads and un-doing the bottlenecks are so very vital.

Agriculture, tourism and manufacturing account for 47 percent of the Wisconsin economy. We can't expect Wisconsin to continue to grow without relieving our bottlenecks and fixing our pot holes.

Riding to school on the hay wagon and picking up neighbor kids along the way was actually kind of fun and sometimes my dad would let us ride next to him on the Ford tractor, but 60 years ago was a different time.

State Representative Don Vruwink represents parts of Rock, Walworth, Jefferson, and Dane counties. These include the communities of Whitewater, Milton, Edgerton, Footville, the Town of Janesville, part of the Village of Oregon, and surrounding townships. He can be reached at 608-266-3790, Rep.Vruwink@legis.wisconsin.gov, and P.O. Box 8953, Madison WI 53708.

-END-