



# Saint Louis County

Administration • 100 North Fifth Avenue West, Room 202 • Duluth, MN 55802  
Phone: (218) 726-2450 • Fax: (218) 726-2469 • [www.stlouiscountymn.gov](http://www.stlouiscountymn.gov)

**Kevin Z. Gray**  
County Administrator

## NEWS RELEASE

**For immediate release:**

December 2, 2014

**CONTACT:** Dana Kazel, Communications Manager  
218-725-5049 (office) • 218-591-2219 (cell)

### County Board approves Transportation Sales Tax

As early as next summer, people will see additional projects in the works to improve St. Louis County roads and bridges. The county board today approved implementing a half percent Transportation Sales Tax, which will raise an estimated \$10.5 million annually. All revenue collected through the sales tax will be dedicated to transportation-related projects within the county. The tax goes into effect April 1, 2015.

“Any tax is a difficult decision,” said Board Chair Mike Forsman. “But knowing the poor condition of our transportation system, this is absolutely needed for public safety. Over the last 20 years, the costs to maintain our roads and bridges have gone up tremendously, but the revenue we’re given to do the work has gone down. The legislature has given us the opportunity with this sales tax to take care of St. Louis County, and for us to wait any longer will only increase the cost.”

The state legislature in 2013 authorized counties to enact a transportation sales tax as a way to address transportation needs. St. Louis County will use the revenue raised to repair its paved roads that are in the poorest condition; replace critical bridge infrastructure; accelerate safety projects identified in the County Highway Safety Plan; provide off-road trails for bicyclists, pedestrian and motorized vehicles; support Safe Routes to School; and add funding to the county’s Gravel Road Investment Plan (GRIP) to stabilize dusty gravel roads.

Immediately following the vote, Commissioner Pete Stauber brought forward a directive motion, which passed unanimously and states the county will “engage with all municipalities and townships for discussion on mutually beneficial projects that may be incorporated into future plans for the revenues collected”.

St. Louis County is responsible for 3,000 miles of roadway; approximately half are paved,

the rest are gravel. Of the county's 1,500 miles of paved roads, nearly a third – 500 miles – are in very poor condition. The county also is responsible for more than 600 bridges, approximately 20 percent of which are considered deficient.

Commissioners determined a sales tax would be a more fair way to raise the needed funds because approximately a third of the money raised would be generated by non-county residents – those motorists who don't pay property taxes here, but travel on our roads work, shop and visit. To raise the equivalent amount of money through property taxes would have required a 9.3 percent increase in the levy for St. Louis County residents.

The sales tax will only apply to those purchases that are subject to states sales and use tax. The one exception is on new and used vehicles bought from a dealer. Buyers instead will be charged a one-time \$20 excise tax. Exempt from the sales tax are items such as food, clothing and any other items that are not normally taxed.

St. Louis County serves more than 200,000 people spread across 7,000 square miles. To learn more, visit [stlouiscountymn.gov](http://stlouiscountymn.gov).

###