

TUA NEWS RELEASE

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The Illinois Road Hysteria

Smelling blood in the water, special interest groups and tax thieving politicians pounced on the possibility of an Illinois capital spending bill. To fund the capital spending bill's road and transit projects, politicians and activists have called for a gas tax increase of [20 cents per gallon](#) up to [85 cents per gallon](#). To accept the capital bill and its likely tax increases, groups like the Fight Back Fund have been airing propaganda to scare Illinois motorists. [The organization is headed by Marc Poulos, executive director of the Indiana, Illinois, Iowa Foundation for Fair Contracting, which represents the powerful International Union of Operating Engineers Local 150. One of their commercials promoting the lavish road spending made allusions to children being harmed in car accidents as reasons to support such a bill.](#) The ad even ended with the call to action, "How many more people have to die before we act?" What these anti-taxpayer scare tactics don't want you to know though, is that Illinois roads are surprisingly good.

The American Society for Civil Engineers (ASCE), a society known for their advocacy on infrastructure projects, [has graded the Illinois road network at a D](#), or "poor," with the overall infrastructure graded at a C-. These are not the grades you would want you son or daughter to come home with, but there is a problem with this rating system. It does nothing to reference what poor *means*. They can cite *why* they gave it a poor grade, but can only compare its grade with other U.S. states. Poor can mean a 95% score for all the good it does. Thankfully, since the ASCE also rated the [United States road network as a whole as a D too](#), we can compare the Illinois grade with other countries. So what is the condition of America's roads?

The condition of America's roads are actually very good. According to reports published by the World Economic forum, of the 137 countries measured [the United States has the 10th best roads in the world](#). On a global sliding scale from 1-7 with a 7 being the best, the United States scored a 5.7 in total. This score beats out other developed countries like Germany which scored a 5.5 for it's rank of 15th place. So if the ASCE ranks Illinois as the same as the national average, a D grade, then Illinois has some of the best roads in the world, even better than Germany's roads.

Some would criticize the declaration that Illinois has surprisingly good roads by pointing to the Illinois bridge issue. [Over two weeks ago an Illinois bridge on Lake Shore Drive made headlines by having cracks in its steel supports.](#) It is also a fact that there are 2,290 structurally deficient bridges in Illinois. However, despite the scary sounding classification what structurally deficient means is more mundane. From the Federal Highway Administration, "[Bridges are considered structurally deficient if significant load-carrying elements are in poor condition due to deterioration or damage.](#)" That is it, just poor condition. Now consider the fact [only 9% of the Illinois](#) bridges are "structurally deficient" and the problem is a lot smaller than how it is presented.

Illinois infrastructure is fine. The gas tax already brings in [over a billion dollars a year](#), and should not be raised. In fact, Illinois roads would be even better if Illinois politicians did not steal billions from the fund for other projects, or use the funds to subsidize empty Chicago Transit Authority buses. Instead, Illinois government should take a stand for taxpayers, forget a massive multi-billion dollar tax increase, and live within its means like everyone else.