



Guest commentary

Michigan's roads affect everyone, so a 'yes' vote on Proposal 1 makes sense

17 April 2015

by **Scott Gilman**

“People first, not potholes” was my first reaction to hearing about **Proposal 1**, the May 5 ballot proposal to increase funding to fix Michigan's roads and bridges. As executive director of **network180**, the behavioral health authority for Kent County (26 agencies providing services to almost 17,000 annually), I am passionate about advocating for funding for mental health services, the disabled and those with special needs. At first glance, fixing potholes didn't rank high on my priority list.

It turns out that my first reaction was wrong. I was reminded by a man using a wheelchair that potholes do affect people and in particular those who have to traverse the roads and intersections around them using wheelchairs, canes and walkers; cyclists and parents pushing strollers and wagons deal with this as well. This man had been in a service van that couldn't swerve around a large pothole and was knocked to the floor. This is just one story of many. Potholes do affect people, particularly those least likely to have a voice in this hotly contested ballot proposal.

Managing daily transit is magnified for those who are not able-bodied when roads and curb cuts are in shambles. Proposal 1 is our best chance to finally get the needed funding that will fix our roads and bridges for the long haul. All of us, whether as individuals or business owners or leaders of treatment agencies such as ours, have to



Scott Gilman is CEO of network180, a consortium of social-service agencies in Kent County.

take the long view. This is a solution that Michigan has needed for more than a decade. Our safety – as pedestrians, drivers or passengers – is at risk if we don't do something.

Proposal 1 also provides guarantees that local governments and schools won't be cut off at the knees. Our local governments will receive some of the sales tax funding, but it is not "pork" as some claim. Our cities, townships and villages use these revenue sharing dollars to provide us with fire and police protection, amongst other services. I don't know of anyone who thinks these services are "extras" for our communities.

Proposal 1 restores the Earned Income Tax Credit, which will allow many of those whom network180 serves the opportunity to stay in the workforce and get back on their feet. The designated funding to the K-12 schools assures that the money for our children who have special needs within the school system will not get diverted elsewhere.

Overall, Proposal 1 is a solution that Michigan cannot afford to pass up. Network180 strongly supports its passage on May 5.

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15 comments from Bridge readers.

April 17, 2015 at 6:18 pm

I have sympathy for people with disabilities but I'm not going to be guilt tripped into voting yes.

John Q. Public

April 17, 2015 at 8:31 pm

I'm not quite sure what to make of the fact that the CEOs of every for-profit corporation, every not-for-profit corporation, every municipal corporation, and every lobbying firm are all writing columns urging us to vote 'yes', while at the same time better than 90% of the individuals who comment online indicate they are voting 'no'.

It's as if it is the Elites vs. Everyman; as if Snyder and Calley are calling in every outstanding chip they hold; as if they are making promises of new government largess in return for an approving column.

The Elites think we're pretty gullible and not very bright. I hope May 6th doesn't find them to be correct.

Gary

April 19, 2015 at 9:44 pm

WRITE ON VOTE NO

Duane

April 18, 2015 at 3:43 pm

Mr. Gilman only sees the long view and disregards the long history of spending other people's money. Mr. Gilman shows no interest in the short view of how our money is spent, no interest in the accountability of the programs and agencies spending the money.

The more I have heard the proponents my support has eroded, today I vote no. They started with fear, now with guilt,

next it will be threats. Why don't they learn to ask and listen?

jgrant

April 19, 2015 at 12:52 am

I will vote NO, but because you are the problem. Your right wing political friends don't have the eggs to tell you they lie, that some terrible things are done with your money, which just isn't true. They tell you that government gets too much money and wastes it. Why did these cowards put this on the ballot? Because they want to pretend that there's all this money floating around, but if they raised taxes, they'd have to explain why they'd been lying to you. So rather than use their power to raise taxes, they want to shuffle it off unto us. For five years they've gutted education, local municipalities, and the middle-class taxpayer in favor of tax cuts for the rich and corporations. Now they are going to give some of it back? I don't believe them. I will vote NO because you believe your Republicans big lie.

Duane

April 19, 2015 at 1:08 pm

jgrant,

Did you read what I said or what you wanted to hear?

Do you understand what accountability involves, it is about results, about evaluating means and methods used to achievement results or changing things until the expected results are delivered?

Why are you so resistant to have the programs held accountable for results, why not have the agencies administering those programs establish accountability protocols, why not have elected officials that authorize the money be interested in results and have an accountability protocol for what they authorize?

Do you believe the government should hold private companies accountable for their actions? Do you believe the government should individuals accountable for their actions? If you do then why are you so opposed to holding the government accountable for their actions?

I have learned that we don't have all the answers every moment and that when we talk with others about what we are doing new ideas, changes in approach, different perspectives come into the discussion that help us improve what and how we do things. Why shouldn't our government use such an effective method as part of how they strive to deliver the desired results?

Rich

April 19, 2015 at 6:29 am

If the Roadbuilders union and the MEA are for it, then it deserved the "no" vote I already gave it on my absentee ballot. Too much money going to other interests and not enough to the roads. We do not need a percentage going to a bicycle trail in Merryville, or a percentage going to new rugs in Studyville, or any other diversion. We need 100% going to fix the roads and the fix should contain clauses to cut truck weights to the national limit on interstate roads, severely restrict truck weights on non-freeway roads, add a warranty to every road project, and insist on road designs where orange barrels in two years after repair are not going to happen.

Jay Johnson

April 19, 2015 at 8:41 am

With Proposition 1, we are going to: (A) tax ourselves about \$2 billion more in order to pay off \$814 million in Governor Engler's road bond debt before we begin to fix the roads; (B) restore \$292 million to the school fund from which the 2014 lame duck legislature just stole \$150 million to "balance" the budget; (C) pay \$261 million to restore the earned income tax credit that Governor Snyder stole to help provide funding for his two massive business tax cuts that were going to provide "jobs"; (D) pay \$100 million to our local governments to replace the "constitutionally guaranteed" revenue sharing funds that Lansing has defaulted on from almost the get go. And then, after all these puts and takes, the general fund will receive about \$15 million in "new money". That "surplus" — along with the permanent "budget surpluses" that would result from the legislature's never, ever again having to dip into the general fund to pay for roads or schools or revenue sharing — means that the current legislature will easily be able to lower the income tax rate and

still be able to “balance the budget” in 2016. Beneath it all, Proposition 1 is just another shift in the tax burden from those who are well off to those who are not.

Glenn

April 19, 2015 at 6:29 pm

And don't forget the tax on pensions that we were promised for decades would not occur and that we partially based our retirement plans on, so that corporations would get a job-creating (ha!) break, and the tax credits that those of us who support public institutions and soup kitchens lost, also for corporations. Snyder, the legislature, and all the others supporting Proposal 1 are clueless. We've voting no.

R.L.

April 19, 2015 at 10:34 am

I said from the very beginning. Let each and every request ,ballot, or whatever term you wish to use , stand on it's own merits. This bundelling and packaging everything is confusing and deceptive at best. Yes we need to fix the roads, fix our schools, and infrastructure, but don't pit one group against another. 7% sales tax is too much, especially for those who make multiple major purchases. R.L.

Richard McLellan

April 19, 2015 at 12:18 pm

I voted yes by absentee because I told myself I would vote for anything that fixes the roads, but I had to hold my nose. It is unlikely that the Legislature will come up with another approach even though it is their job.

I suspect we may have to wait a few years for the roads to get really, really bad before people are willing to pay for what they use.

John Q. Public

April 19, 2015 at 4:20 pm

I, too, will vote for whatever will fix the roads. I'm voting 'no' on Proposal 1, though. That's for suckers.

Skeptic

April 19, 2015 at 8:54 pm

The road repairs should have been financed by a fuel tax increase (given the low gasoline prices) but our political leaders didn't have the spine to do that. I'm voting no to this regressive sales tax increase. I'd strongly prefer even an increase in our relatively low income tax rate to the sales tax hike that's being proposed.

Gary

April 19, 2015 at 9:38 pm

A yes vote makes cents is what it does. It gives local governments to spend as the please paying the high wages, benefits, health insurance, and pensions of employees that make their annual visits filling in the same pot holes on a yearly bases. After getting scammed on Proposal A that was supposed to fund schools and replace property taxes the voters rejected the Enhancement Proposal. and here comes another fund the schools proposal. I am 100% for fixing the roads I am 100% against Proposal One

Jeff

April 20, 2015 at 12:46 am

I would vote yes on proposal 1 if it was a 1 cent increase in sales tax dedicated entirely to the roads, about 800 million per year. The legislature could have done this, but they chose to add all this other crap that has nothing to do with it. Sorry there is not enough money to fund the teachers pensions at this time. In addition, how does the cost of the pensions rise fivefold in three years? Don't they have a 401k like everyone else was forced in to? I am of the

understanding the mass transit money is for Detroit only. Why should everyone else have to pay for that. At a recent meeting of county officials, due to the substantial shortfall proposal 1 will actually provide for road repairs, all municipalities will have to ask the citizens for more money in addition. At what point will people get tired of the hidden agendas, irrelevant funding add ons, and lack funding dedication that allows money to be transferred to other programs. A lot more would get done if the legislature kept it simple. Please correct me on any point if I am wrong. It is getting to the point where the middle class an no longer afford to pay the bills by themselves.