

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Overview

This bill makes various changes related to agency management and operational practices of the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). It requires a debt management policy, amends transportation planning requirements, establishes a controller position, and requires reporting concerning bridge inspection quality assurance and departmental management changes since the I-35W bridge collapse.

Section

- 1 Research activities.** Encourages MnDOT to expend a portion of research funds for certain activities. The research areas identified are: (1) innovations in bridge monitoring and inspection technology, (2) improving bridge inspection methods, and (3) examining the long-term costs of deferred highway and bridge design and maintenance work.

Under current law, the Commissioner may use up to two percent of appropriations (excluding state-aids) for research, but no minimum amount is specified.
- 2 Biennial report on bridge inspection quality assurance.** Requires a report each odd-numbered year on MnDOT's bridge inspection quality assurance, including a summary of quality assurance procedures and any recent changes, notable findings from recent bridge inspection reviews, actions taken by MnDOT, and an analysis of Minnesota's compliance with Federal Highway Administration requirements including any actions taken to bring Minnesota into compliance. The report is due annually by February 1.

- 3 [167.60] Debt financing management policy.** Requires that MnDOT develop debt financing management guidelines to handle financial management of trunk highway bonds, federal advanced construction funding, and any other financing sources based on debt or future repayment. The provision requires that the policy serve as a decision-making guide, allows MnDOT to update the policy as needed, and requires consultation with the Department of Finance and legislative leaders.

The provision also specifies particular issues that need to be addressed within the policy, such as limits on the allowed total amount of debt and practices for managing trunk highway cash flow balances. MnDOT must provide a copy of the policy and future updates to the legislature.

- 4 Mission; efficiency; legislative report, recommendations.** Modifies the Department of Transportation mission, in order to explicitly identify safety as a key priority. MnDOT's mission under current law includes preventing fiscal waste, using technology innovative business practices, and using cooperative labor-management practices.
- 5 Unclassified positions.** Requires the Commissioner or a Deputy Commissioner of MnDOT to be a professional engineer and hold the title of chief engineer.
- 6 Electronic reports.** Clarifies that for any legislative reports required of MnDOT that can or must be submitted electronically, the agency has to provide physical copies to the Legislative Reference Library (which is a requirement for all legislative reports).
- 7 Revision of statewide multimodal transportation plan.** Modifies MnDOT planning requirements to include performance targets in the statewide multimodal transportation plan. Makes the next revisions of the report due in 2016 and every six years after that. Makes technical changes.
- Performance targets were first incorporated into MnDOT's 2003 statewide plan.
- 8 Statewide highway 20-year capital investment plan.** Requires a 20-year plan on capital investments by 2012, and in conjunction with the statewide multimodal transportation plan after that. It must provide certain analyses of the transportation performance targets, provide projections on funding streams, and establish investment priorities.
- 9 Report on Department of Transportation management changes.** Requires a legislative report on MnDOT management changes. The report is due by February 1, 2011, and specifies four areas of focus:

- Identifying changes to the department's organizational structure for bridge management and inspections;
- Analyzing the division of bridge-related duties between MnDOT's central office and districts;
- Outlining current practice and changes in procedures and processes for (1) bridge load re-rating, (2) agency-wide standards for inspection documentation and post-inspection bridge maintenance work, and (3) any other safety related changes; and
- Analyzing anticipated budgetary allocations for fiscal years 2012 through 2018 to pavement preservation, maintenance, safety projects, expansion projects, and

highway and bridge construction, including any upcoming challenges.

In addition to a legislative report, the provision mandates that MnDOT prepare a summary for distribution and providing oral testimony. It also directs the transportation chairs to make an effort to hold hearings on the report findings during the 2010 session.