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Snelling Center Issues Report on Strategies to Fund Road and Bridge Repairs

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The Snelling Center for Government reported today that surveys of business leaders and the public indicate that Vermonters want action to fix Vermont's deteriorating roads and bridges. "Our surveys told us that Vermonters want transportation to be a high priority," said Charlie Smith, president of the Snelling Center. "Bridge repair is at the very top of the priority list."

Data from the Agency of Transportation show that Vermont's roads and bridges are deteriorating rapidly. Situations like the failing bridge in the Town of Richmond demonstrate how a village can be isolated and harmed when a bridge is closed. Moreover, the shortfall in funding for preventive maintenance and light repairs leads to much more expensive reconstruction projects. "Roads and bridges are a basic responsibility of government. This is a crucial issue for Vermont's prosperity and for the viability of our communities in the coming decades," Smith said.

The Snelling Center's report also indicates that Vermonters recognize that putting more money in roads and bridges will require political compromise. "While few people are enthusiastic about new taxes, a large majority supports taxes as part of the solution," Smith said. "They also favor reallocation of current spending as part of the solution." 89% of the business leaders and 63% of the general public said they favored a compromise even if it included an equal share from their "least favored" funding source. "Vermonters are realists," Smith said. "They want to be told the truth; they want priorities to be set; and they want problems to be solved."

When asked what tax source they would favor most, a strong majority cited user-related taxes such as gas and diesel fuel taxes, rather than income, sales or property taxes. The surveys also indicated support for major public borrowing to accelerate road and bridge repairs. 93% of business leaders and 79% of others favor public borrowing, with the majority favoring a debt increase of \$220 million or more (i.e. 50% increase over current borrowing levels.)

The Snelling Center for Government is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that fosters civic leadership and promotes informed citizen participation in public policy.

For the full *Vermont Roads and Bridges* report, the Executive Summary, and the Critical Data Guide, go to: www.snellingcenter.org/vermontroadsandbridges.

The Snelling Center for Government is a non-partisan, non-profit organization committed to fostering responsible and ethical civic leadership, encouraging public service by private citizens, and promoting informed citizen participation in shaping public policy in Vermont. For more information, please visit our website at www.snellingcenter.org.

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