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## **Local View: Robust bonding bill can help Minnesota recover**

Written By: Craig Olson | May 10th 2020 - 10am.

This year is a bonding year at the Minnesota Capitol. This is when the Legislature authorizes the state to sell bonds to raise money for public construction projects that benefit the entire state. These investments can help build and preserve public buildings, fuel local economic development, and provide safe water and roads. Investment in public infrastructure projects will spur needed economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and help keep Minnesota's communities working.

Townships, cities, counties, and state agencies have requested more than \$5 billion in unmet needs that could fund more than 500 public construction projects across our state. While not all of these projects will get funded, a strong bonding bill would create the stimulus we need to help strengthen Minnesota's economy during these difficult times.

Bonding is a valuable economic-development tool to fund our state's economic recovery from the impacts of COVID-19. In our region, construction professionals will be ready to take on these new infrastructure projects safely. Construction workers and their contractors are committed to high-quality, family-sustaining jobs and ensuring that going to work is safe for workers, their families, and our community.

What would a state bonding package mean to us locally? More than 15 bonding projects valued at over \$70 million are proposed for our region. For example, the University of Minnesota Duluth has requested \$4.4 million in bonding dollars to renovate A.B. Anderson Hall, which serves nearly 50 majors and is a center for liberal education on the Duluth campus. Anderson Hall serves 4,500 students every semester and houses nearly 40 faculty offices. Originally built in 1970, Anderson Hall needs a 21st-century upgrade for fire protection, mechanical systems, ADA compliance, and general renovations. Anderson Hall is essential to the work of the College of Liberal Arts and the School of Fine Arts. The bonding money would help attract students to the liberal and fine-arts programs at UMD and keep our community working.

In funding this and other projects, the Minnesota Legislature should consider a balanced approach to paying for building, water, and transportation infrastructure. This would allow the state to maximize its bonding power to provide ongoing economic stimulus to all the areas of our state that need it most.