

Testimony – Darren Trast, MnDOT road maintenance worker
Senate Transportation Committee hearing on SF 2657
March 28, 2006

My name is Darren Trast. I'm a transportation generalist with six years experience working for the Department of Transportation. I am currently the vice president and chief steward of AFSCME Local 2792. I see firsthand all of the different areas of work that are outsourced to private vendors.

I've worked in many different locations and jobs where I've seen a lot of work go out the door. For example, the **signing and striping** department has shrunk. Most sign renewals and overhead sign replacements are done by a contractor. Construction signs are done by contractors; then billed to the project. The actual fabrication of signs was set to shutdown a few years ago, until a study showed that state employees were doing the work at a far better price. In the past, eight workers were responsible for statewide striping. Today, there are only a few strippers. That's because the majority of the work is billed out to contractors and done with federal bridge and road funds.

The state recently upgraded a camera truck, which is used to shoot **culverts and drainage structures** to see what condition they are in and what kind of restoration is needed. A large portion of this work was contracted out to companies like VISI-Sewer.

Freeway lighting has been outsourced to Honda Electric and Collysis for renewals and major improvements. MnDOT still takes care of damaged light poles and traffic signals.

Guardrail replacement and renewals have been outsourced to TIMME Construction. MnDOT's work is limited to repairing and replacing rails with minor damage.

Blowups and road heaves were a major problem last summer. MnDOT put on temporary Band-Aids, but outsourced the road replacement.

Snow and ice removal is a major public service. This winter MnDOT hired at least 39 temporary workers to plow snow. The job historically has been done by experienced, skilled state employees who maintain our roads year round. Now plowing is being outsourced, often to people who lack skill and experience.

Most **mill and overlay jobs** have been outsourced to private vendors like PCI and Shafer because the state is only allowed to pave a mile a day. That's half a mile each direction, because MnDOT is held to a higher standard where it cannot leave uneven lanes overnight. Contractors are not held to that standard and we don't have enough inspectors to monitor them.

By passing this legislation, MnDOT will have the ability to regain much of the work that its employees have performed so well over the years. We have the ability, the desire and the need for higher quality and more efficient crews to maintain our transportation system.