See earlier reports on Arkansas’ needs (2 in Dec. 2006, preceding the legislature, for example).

Today 1-1-08 TMN printed "Revenue Loss Exhausting Budgets" about the governments on all levels "trimming money for public schools, reducing grants to help the homeless" and more (and next to it "Insured Mortgage defaults Reach Record"). This is an opportunity for the peace movement. None of the articles attributed the economic decline and loss of services to the wars, the half a trillion dollars military budget, the trillion spent recently for wars. Whereas our ethical and legal opposition to the wars has not aroused the churches or the professional groups to rise up, the economic argument might. If this possibility seems true to one or more of you, you might wish to create a campaign for OMNI to awaken and activate some of the publics. (Another powerful argument is “character,” and especially leadership: the total incompetence of the invasion and occupation during 2003-04 exposes the lack of character and leadership so many voters claim is central to them. See the film “No End in Sight"

MAKING CHOICES FOR ROADS OVER OTHER NEEDS
“State Ready to Get Bids for Paving: $56 Million of surplus to Fund Road Projects” by Noel Oman (ADG 4-12-07). “It’s been a real shot in the arm,” declared Dan Flowers, director of the Highway and Transportation Department.”
“Beebe Pitches New Plan: Governor Suggests Using Extra Revenue for Road Work” by Jason Wiest (TMN 11-9-07), revenue from proposed natural gas tax.

MORE HIGHWAYS—MORE SPRAWL—NEEDED??
A REGIONAL MOBILITY AUTHORITY IS NEEDED?
"Mobility Authority in the Works" by Brenda Blagg. (TMN 2-1-08). “So urgent is the need for better roadways in Northwest Arkansas that it seems formation of a Regional Mobility Authority [more and wider highways, new north-south corridors] has been a long time coming.
"Local Folks Take Step To Fix Roads," editorial in TMN (Feb. 2, 2008). According to this editorial, Arkansas needs $19 billion for roads and NWA needs $2 billion. The writer supports the Regional Mobility Authority to speed up “badly needed highway projects.” The authority could levy taxes, issue bonds, and go faster than the state.
“Highway Robbery" by "Jonah-Tebbetts"
We knew it was coming. Last night, the Northwest Arkansas Council of Corporations and Wealthy Business Executives moved their first pawn in the game to get "authority" to exercise eminent domain and to raise your taxes for their latest project to increase their income at public expense. Judge Gary Black and the Benton County Quorum Court rolled over for their masters with hardly a fight and voted to join the Regional "Mobility" Authority. The vote was 9-2.

Green thinking and pump prices have convinced the public to reduce gasoline consumption and pay less in gas taxes, and road taxes on the trucking industry are ridiculously low. "Traditional ways of generating money aren't working anymore,"
said Jonathan Barnett, the state Highway Commissioner from Siloam Springs, so the Good Suit Club wants local taxpayers to build some roads for them. Thirty-five white men packed the room. Jeff Hammonds from Wal-Mart and its 7,000 truck fleet said they needed to address infrastructure to keep businesses strong. J.B. Hunt trucking executives were there to demand passage, as was Scott Van Laningham from XNA. Ed Clifford of the Bentonville/Bella Vista Chamber of Commerce told them that residents need to pony up $1.6 billion in new taxes to fund this scheme. No one spoke against it.

It is all about getting local residents to build high dollar bypasses for Bella Vista and Springdale, which the unelected Northwest Arkansas Council of Corporations and Wealthy Business Executives have decided for us that these are their top priority. Not a dime for light rail or public transportation that would reduce congestion, save energy, support sustainability, and improve transportation for the elderly, the disabled, and the moderate income employees.

Governor Beebe is considering calling a special legislative session to raise the severance tax on natural gas and dedicate the entire $50-$100 million annual revenue to highways. If every last penny of that went to the Northwest Arkansas Council of Corporations and Wealthy Business Executives' Regional Mobility Authority, it would still be $600 million to $1.1 billion shy of what they are demanding from local residents. And just for fun, let's start a pool on how many of the Republican state legislators from Northwest Arkansas will be voting to increase the severance tax on the extractions by big energy companies.

Mike Malone said the business group will be asking the Washington County Quorum Court to approve its taxing authority and eminent domain power next week, and don't expect the Fayetteville Chamber of Cowbirds or Jeff Koenig's FEDC to oppose this plan to tax you like they killed the city's proposed road impact fees on developers. Our Quorum Court might consider finding funds to expand public transit and improve the bridges on our county roads before they start raising our taxes to build a Bella Vista Truck Bypass for Wal-Mart, Tyson, and J.B. Hunt. Posted by Jonah at Friday, January 25, 2008  http://jonah-tebbets.blogspot.com/

CONGRESSMAN BOOZMAN
Our Congressman’s public relations machine represents him as a caring man. But he has voted with Pres. Bush in all the reductions of caring services and for all the increases in wars.

PREVENTING HIGHWAYS
Year after year the inevitability of more highways is taken for granted by government and corporate officials, by developers, by real estate agents, and by the media. So let's call for public hearings that incorporate the following:

1) All discussion of highways must occur simultaneously with competing, possibly more urgent needs of Arkansans—for health, education, food, clean water, shelter, jobs.

2) The disaster of global warming from sprawl must be taken into consideration along with any and every plans for new sprawl-producing highways. Regional transportation...
bodies must prepare a plan for preventing the need of new highways through in-fill and public transportation for the reduction of CO2. In every ordinary public and corporate planning, anticipation and prevention of problems take precedent. But regarding highways, no consideration is given to reducing cars, reducing driving, reducing commuting. New highways should be the very last resort after all other alternatives have been considered and tried.

3) The diversion of funds to illegal, unnecessary wars by incompetent presidential managers—now up to an estimated trillion dollars for the military budget and the Iraq and Afghan wars—should be stopped and that money applied to human needs. "Revenue Loss Exhausting Budgets" by Stephanie Simon (ADG 1-1-08) because of the mortgage crisis/housing slowdown, but the writer doesn’t mention the much more financially disastrous wars and occupations.

ARKANSAS’ NEEDS

FOOD
“A Hidden Hunger” by Ron Wood, “Empty Plates Go Unseen in Northwest Arkansas” (TMN 12-23-07). This is the first in a 3-part series on “Faces of Hunger” despite efforts by Ozark Food Bank and other agencies.
“Tour Gathers Hunger Stories” by Jill Zeman (TMN 12-13-07).

HEALTH
“Arkansas’ Health Care Stands Near Bottom…” by Nell Smith (ADG 6-13-07).
“Arkansas’ health care ranks among the worst” at 48th, and for the last 5 years, because of lack of insurance, lack of preventive services, and other factors.

“Officials Release Report on State of Arkansas Children’s Health.” TMN (7-18-07). ARKids First has increased basic health care coverage for children of working poor, but “children’s dental health is ‘distinctly worse’ in Arkansas” than in rest of the nation, childhood obesity is worse, and “fatal accidents for children” is worse.

“State’s Services Poor” by Dana Kelley. ADG (8-3-07). We are “38th in the nation” in education spending per-pupil, but eigth as % of income.


“Beebe: States Can’t Afford to Wait on Feds.” TMN (8-16-07). Ark. must find ways to expand health care on its own, to provide “affordable and accessible and quality health care.”


“Health Care Shortfall Grows Worse,” editorial in TMN (12-2-07).

“In Demand” by Susannah Patton (NW A 1-18-08). Despite the addition of 26 additional beds for children and adolescents by Vista Health mental health clinic, the demand far exceeds the spaces. “It’s
We could have a paradise here for the money the people of Arkansas have contributed to all the illegal US wars. Try to see Hijacking Catastrophe and No End in Sight on Iraq, excellent documentary explanations of how a few right wingers (Wolfowitz, the Project for New American Century) pushed a willing public into the disastrously destructive and self-destructive invasion and occupation of Iraq, brought about the enormous increase of the military budget and militarism. Meanwhile, Arkansas needs, the nation's, the world's needs are unmet.

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