



NEWS RELEASE

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Bush Budget Neglects Nation's Transportation Needs

Washington, D.C. – Transportation unions are deeply disappointed but not surprised that the President has again issued a budget that badly short-changes the transportation system and infrastructure needs of our nation.

“This Administration has kept the streak alive,” said Edward Wytkind, President of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO. “Eight consecutive Bush budgets have neglected our national transportation system and left our economy vulnerable.”

“The decaying state of our transportation infrastructure isn't some theory – the collapse of the I-35 Bridge in Minneapolis is proof that more inaction and neglect threaten Americans' lives and our national economy,” Wytkind said. “You can't just wish for things to somehow take care of themselves – you have to establish priorities and commit the resources to make them happen.”

Once again, the Bush Administration has proposed a funding level for Amtrak that would bankrupt it, abandon 26 million passengers and eliminate 20,000 jobs.

“The Administration spends more taxpayers' dollars in Iraq in three days than it wants to spend on passenger rail in a year,” Wytkind said. “Moreover, this budget fails to fund the cost of newly completed collective bargaining agreements at Amtrak which were based entirely on the recommendations of the President's own hand-picked Presidential Emergency Board.”

The Bush budget also under funds badly needed investment in our aviation system, especially projects like runway expansions and improvements. The Bush proposal for the Airport Improvement Program is \$765 million less than what was enacted last year. The budget also does very little to stem the mass exodus of experienced air traffic controllers and other FAA employees.

“Starving our aviation system of the resources it needs jeopardizes the safety of air travel in America, undermines the economy and accelerates the already alarming rate of retirements by veteran FAA workers who have grown weary of an Administration that routinely tramples on their collective bargaining rights.”

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By cutting transit and highway funding by \$202 million and \$1.8 billion, respectively, the Bush budget breaks the promises made when the President signed into law the most recent highway and transit reauthorization bill, better known as SAFETEA-LU.

“The President must have missed the news: Americans are starving for more public transportation and safer highways, not more overcrowded buses and trains and gridlock on our roads,” Wytkind said.

The Bush budget funds only half of what Bush is authorized by Congress to spend on port security grants: \$210 million instead of \$400 million.

“Press conferences and photo ops will not secure our ports – real investments in serious homeland security initiatives will,” Wytkind added.

In spite of a robust and much celebrated 9/11 Commission bill, rail and mass transit security is significantly under funded in the Bush budget proposal. Despite the many lessons learned from the September 11 attacks, the Bush Administration requested a fraction of what he was authorized by the 9/11 bill to spend to bring security in line with today’s needs.

“What’s the point of passing the 9/11 Commission Recommendations bill if the President refuses to fund it?”

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