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Transportation Labor Testifies: Costs of Delaying Surface Transportation Bill Higher Than Costs of Passing It

WASHINGTON, DC – *Edward Wytkind, President of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, testifies today before the House Ways and Means Committee about the challenges of funding a new Surface Transportation Authorization bill and the Highway Trust Fund. Below are excerpts from his oral testimony:*

“We can’t wait another 18 months for a surface transportation authorization bill. Americans suffering in this recession can’t wait until 2011 for good jobs. Our transportation system and infrastructure are plunging into a state of severe disrepair and can’t wait a year and a half for new investments...”

“Transit systems nationwide are hemorrhaging. From Boston to St. Louis, Cleveland to Portland, Atlanta to Miami, and statewide in California, service and jobs cuts are mounting. It is no better in transportation construction: nationwide, the jobless rate is approaching 20 percent, even worse in some states...”

“History shows that transportation bills are engines of job creation. The economic recovery bill, which dedicated \$48 billion dollars to transportation infrastructure, was a great first step, but it is only a down payment on job creation and the massive investment needs for America’s transportation systems...”

“Here’s a snapshot of our transportation infrastructure today:

- The average commuter rail passenger coach is 24 years old. 62% are being used beyond their replacement age.
- 59% of transit busses need to be replaced within six years.
- More than 20% of city roads do not pass the basic test for pavement and ride quality.
- 26% of the nation’s bridges are structurally deficient.
- Poor roadway conditions are the #1 contributing cause of motor vehicle crash severity, which cost our government and the American taxpayer \$12 billion dollars annually.

“If we kick this can down the road any more it’s going to land in a pothole...”

“Some are trying to use the crisis in the Highway Trust Fund as the reason to delay a multi-year surface transportation bill. The fact is we must do both. We must patch the Highway Trust Fund before the August recess. And we must complete the reauthorization bill during this session of Congress – the nation cannot wait for action on either of these priorities...”

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

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Edward Wytkind, President • Patricia Friend, Secretary-Treasurer



“We must pay for America’s massive transportation infrastructure needs with dollars, not fairy dust or more hyperbole about the need to invest in America. There are two choices: raise revenues or fail to meet this country’s real transportation needs. If we fail, we also miss the opportunity to put people back to work while the economy continues to bleed jobs...”

“Make no mistake – the costs of delaying a robust surface transportation bill are higher than the costs of passing it.”

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The Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, represents 32 member unions in the aviation, rail, transit, trucking, highway, longshore, maritime and related industries. For more information, visit www.ttd.org.