



# NEWS RELEASE

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## LaHood, Oberstar Meet with National Transportation Union Leaders

### *Transportation Unions Challenge Policymakers to Break Cycle of Underinvestment*

MIAMI, FL – Transportation union leaders met yesterday in their annual winter meeting and discussed their priority issues with Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and Rep. James Oberstar (D-MN), Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Leaders of the 32 unions that comprise the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, discussed transportation investment, safety and security issues, and forged an agenda for 2009.

“The Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO is one of our most important partners in rebuilding America’s transportation infrastructure,” Secretary LaHood said.

“We are on the threshold of a transformational era in transportation. We must craft a bold new programmatic and financing structure that will strengthen our economy and sustain our quality of life,” Chairman Oberstar said. “Transportation workers will again be where they have always been: on the front lines of this transformation.”

“America’s anemic economy is in need of serious job creation at a time when our transportation infrastructure is failing,” said Edward Wytkind, president of TTD. “With several key transportation bills to be updated in 2009, the stars are aligning to help break the cycle of underinvestment in America’s transportation system.”

Three important reauthorization bills – for the Federal Aviation Administration, Surface Transportation and Hazardous Materials – were discussed in detail, as well as “Buy America” policies. Policy statements were agreed to for each and are available at [www.ttd.org](http://www.ttd.org). Highlights of the statements include:

#### **Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Bill**

Today’s airports are operating at capacity, radar-based air traffic control systems are outdated and the safety of our aviation system is potentially compromised. Low morale and high turnover have plagued the FAA ever since the Bush Administration abandoned the collective bargaining process with its workers. TTD applauds Chairman Oberstar and Aviation Subcommittee Chairman Jerry Costello for the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2009 (H.R. 915). The bill provides desperately needed investments in our aviation system and makes significant strides on modernization, safety and employee issues.

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

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Priority issues that must be included in the final FAA legislation include:

- Fixing the broken collective bargaining system at the FAA;
- Implementing numerous safety provisions, such as OSHA protections for flight attendants, increased inspection and standards for foreign repair stations that service U.S. aircraft, reversing the staffing crisis at the FAA, and reforming flight and duty time to address dangerous fatigue;
- Clarifying that FedEx mechanics and truck drivers are not aviation workers despite the company's lobbying battle to preserve the misclassification in order to remain union-free;
- Codifying rules on foreign control and ownership of U.S. airlines; and
- Funding modernization and airport improvement initiatives. [<more>](#)

"This legislation should close the book on eight years of Bush Administration mismanagement, under-investment and neglect of the aviation system," Wytkind said.

### **Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill**

TTD unions believe that the current funding model for surface transportation is unsustainable. The gas tax has not been increased in 16 years. During that same time, the tax has lost one-third of its purchasing power due to inflation and cost of living increases. Meanwhile, the American Society of Civil Engineers estimates that it will cost \$2.2 trillion over five years to bring our infrastructure into "good" condition only.

Priority issues that must be resolved by the Surface Transportation bill include:

- Significantly increasing investments in transit, highways, and our intermodal transportation system by raising the federal gas tax and considering other revenue-raising measures;
- Reforming mass transit funding so it can also be used for operating purposes;
- Protecting the rights and jobs of workers with regard to Public Private Partnerships and other innovative financing;
- Ensuring application of 13(c) transit worker protections and Davis-Bacon in all programs;
- Increasing worker training to improve on-the-job safety and job security; and
- Adopting safety measures that protect workers and the public, such as increasing the penalty for assaulting transit operators. [<more>](#)

"It's time to raise the gas tax to meet the nation's surface transportation needs," Wytkind said.

### **Hazardous Materials Reauthorization Bill**

Every day, 1.2 million hazardous material shipments are moved by rail, air, sea and highway. Current laws must be enforced and new legislation must address issues that have arisen since the last bill was passed. Thorough training must be improved for transportation employees as well as firefighters. Trains transporting hazmat should never be staffed with fewer than two crew members. And bulk shipment of lithium batteries should be prohibited on any aircraft. [<more>](#)

## **Buy America Policies**

The U.S. is embarking on a massive initiative to rebuild and expand our transportation infrastructure and create millions of jobs through the economic recovery legislation. If the goal of this legislation is to create jobs, then we must embrace strong Buy America policies. It makes no sense, for example, to invest billions in transit systems without ensuring the locomotives, rail cars and buses are built in America. [<more>](#)

“Buy America requirements are a prerequisite for a strong domestic manufacturing industry,” Wytkind said. “Transportation labor will insist that these requirements are followed in all transportation investment programs.”

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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](http://www.ttd.org).*