



July 16, 2008

Support the National Highway Bridge Reconstruction and Inspection Act

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I urge you to vote in favor of the National Highway Bridge Reconstruction and Inspection Act (H.R. 3999) when it is considered by the House. This important measure will improve the safety of American bridges and decrease the chance of another catastrophic bridge collapse like the one we witnessed almost a year ago in Minneapolis.

H.R. 3999 will improve bridge safety and invest in the reconstruction of structurally deficient bridges. Specifically, the bill requires the federal Department of Transportation (DOT) to create a risk-based approach to safety so that states may focus attention on bridges in need of rehabilitation and replacement. In order to receive federal assistance, states will be required to create a five-year performance plan for highway bridge inspection, rehabilitation and replacement specifically for federal-aid highway bridges which are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

For years, our nation's infrastructure has suffered from an appalling lack of investment. The state of our nation's highway bridges is just one example of what happens when we neglect key aspects of our transportation system. According to the DOT, one out of every eight bridges in the United States is structurally deficient. While this classification does not immediately imply that a bridge will collapse, structurally deficient bridges require significant maintenance and repair to remain in service and eventual rehabilitation or replacement.

H.R. 3999 will ensure that bridges are being properly inspected and facilities in need of improvement are identified and prioritized. In addition, the bill authorizes \$1 billion to repair, reconstruct and replace structurally deficient bridges. While this money will not fully meet the needs to fix existing bridge deficiencies, it does represent an important down payment and will provide immediate assistance to states in desperate need of bridge repair funding.

As we witnessed in Minneapolis, a bridge collapse can have horrific consequences. In addition to the 13 people killed, it is estimated that road user costs totaled \$400,000 per day in travel time delays and increased operational costs. Overall, the state's economy lost \$61 million for 2007 and 2008 as a result of the collapse. Transportation workers and American motorists depend on a safe and reliable highway network. It is clear that we must do more to support this system.

Again, I urge you to pass H.R. 3999 and to ensure that this bill becomes law as quickly as possible. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me or Brendan Danaher at 202/628-9262.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edward Wytkind', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Edward Wytkind
President

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

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