



REAUTHORIZE THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BILL IN THE 111TH CONGRESS

The current surface transportation authorization, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) expired on September 30. Congress has passed an extension of the bill but it remains unclear whether a final six-year bill will be completed in this session. Transportation labor believes it is essential that the 111th Congress pass a \$500 billion surface transportation reauthorization that creates millions of jobs with good wages while improving infrastructure so our nation can grow and prosper. It would be irresponsible to delay action while the economic outlook for American families remains perilous and our transportation needs are vast.

During the March 2009 Executive Committee meeting, TTD adopted a policy statement in support of a robust surface transportation reauthorization that included massive new investments in mass transit, highways and intermodal facilities. The statement also endorsed important revenue raising measures and called for the retention of existing worker protections and updated transportation safety programs. We remain strongly committed to that agenda. A multi-year surface transportation authorization bill is essential for our nation as Americans still suffer under high unemployment and as our transportation infrastructure falls deeper into a state of disrepair.

Government infrastructure spending increases employment and gross domestic product (GDP) better than nearly every other type of government investment. Every dollar of infrastructure spending results in GDP growth of \$1.59. According to the Department of Transportation, spending \$1 billion on transportation infrastructure will create 34,800 jobs.

The surface transportation reauthorization is the natural companion to the economic stimulus bill championed by the President and this Congress. Thanks to the President's leadership, the economic recovery package has paid enormous dividends for American workers as close to 750,000 jobs were created or saved in the first 200 days. Unfortunately, over 400,000 transportation sector jobs have been lost in the current recession. While the recovery bill focused on short-term job growth and addressing immediate infrastructure needs, the surface transportation authorization bill would build on that effort and create or sustain six million good jobs in six years.

Transportation workers are suffering around the country. In the transit and construction sectors, job security remains perilous. Budget problems at the state and local level are causing cuts to transit service and jobs even as ridership rises. The problems worsen daily as transit systems nationwide threaten layoffs in what is otherwise an industry with great potential for continued expansion. From St. Louis to Cleveland, and Miami to California, transit operators are careening from one budget crisis to the next and as a result riders and employees are suffering. In July, construction unemployment exceeded 18 percent, its highest level in 11 years. As of August, there were over 1.5 million unemployed construction workers in this country.

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

Some want to pass an 18-month extension of current programs and defer action on a multi-year reauthorization until the 112th Congress. Transportation labor is opposed to this strategy and instead supports the recent short-term extension of the surface transportation programs to ensure they do not lapse. If this bill is not completed in this Congress we believe action could be delayed until after the 2012 election, a result that transportation workers cannot endorse.

The time has come for elected officials to make responsible decisions about funding our decaying transportation system. Decades of delay and underinvestment have already produced what the American Society of Civil Engineers says is a \$1.8 trillion problem that grows worse by the day.

Transportation labor and most major business groups including the Chamber of Commerce have endorsed an increase in the fuel tax to raise revenue for transportation investments. This user fee has not been increased in 16 years and has lost one-third of its purchasing power in that period. The decrepit state of our national infrastructure provides a concrete illustration of the inherent dangers in continuing to defer action on this issue. The nation cannot wait until the 112th or the 113th Congress for a bill that creates millions of jobs and invests in our neglected surface transportation system. Unemployed and underemployed transportation and construction workers cannot wait years for such an important jobs bill.

Transportation labor opposes a long-term extension of the surface transportation programs and instead endorses congressional action on a multi-year authorization in this Congress that rebuilds our crumbling transportation system and infrastructure. More delays will contribute to rising unemployment. The time to act on this legislation is now.

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