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For More Information:
202/289-4434 (ARTBA)
703/548-3118 (AGC)

July 15, 2008

The Honorable James Oberstar
Chairman
House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Oberstar:

The 28 national associations and construction trade unions of the Transportation Construction Coalition share your view on the urgent need for federal leadership to upgrade deficient bridges on the federal-aid highway system. The National Highway Bridge Reconstruction and Inspection Act, H.R. 3999, is an important step toward achieving this goal and we urge all House members to support this legislation.

The 2007 collapse of the I-35 W Bridge in Minneapolis was a tragedy for all victims and their families. This disaster should serve also as a wake-up call to elected officials at all levels about the importance of maintaining and improving transportation infrastructure facilities. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), approximately 74,000 U.S. bridges are classified as structurally deficient. Furthermore, the U.S. DOT estimates it would cost \$65 billion (in constant 2004 dollars) to fix all existing bridge deficiencies.

H.R. 3999 would begin addressing these backlogs by setting priorities for bridge improvements and establishing minimum inspection standards. These types of targeted reforms would help ensure bridges remain a productive and reliable component of the U.S. transportation infrastructure network.

The nation's surface transportation system has vast unmet needs and transportation inefficiencies are a growing impediment to the U.S. economy and the quality of life of all Americans. These needs extend beyond bridges, to Interstate highways, to local roads, and public transportation facilities. H.R. 3999 is a critical step in addressing these challenges and a comprehensive reform effort should be launched in the 2009 reauthorization of the federal highway and transit programs. This effort will require significant new federal investments and all available financing options, including increased user fees, should be utilized.

Thank you again for your leadership on this critical issue and we urge all members of Congress to support H.R. 3999.

Sincerely,

The Transportation Construction Coalition