

**FLOOR STATEMENT OF  
THE HONORABLE JAMES L. OBERSTAR  
H.R. 7110, THE JOB CREATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF ACT OF 2008  
SEPTEMBER 26, 2008**

I rise in strong support of H.R. 7110, the “Job Creation and Unemployment Relief Act of 2008”.

This bill invests in America -- in the roads, bridges, transit and passenger rail systems, airports, locks, dams, waterways, and environmental infrastructure that enable our economy to work and keep our citizens safe. This is the infrastructure that, too often, we take for granted, until it fails.

This bill recognizes the critical importance of meeting our nation’s transportation and environmental infrastructure investment needs, and provides **\$30 billion** toward that end. This \$30 billion investment will yield lasting benefits in terms of reduced travel times, higher productivity, increased competitiveness in the world marketplace, and cleaner water.

With more than 800,000 construction workers out of work, and the construction industry suffering the highest unemployment rate (8.2 percent) of any industrial sector, **this bill puts America back to work. It will create or sustain more than one million good, family-wage jobs** – jobs that cannot be outsourced to another country, because the work must be done here in the U.S. on our roads, bridges, transit and rail systems, airports, waterways, and wastewater treatment facilities.

For highways and bridges, the bill provides \$12.8 billion. State Departments of Transportation (“DOTs”) have a tremendous backlog of highway projects that could be implemented quickly if these additional funds are made available. For example, State DOTs often have open-ended contracts in place for resurfacing projects, which means that work could begin immediately upon receipt of additional funds. In addition, many State DOTs have projects already in process that could be accelerated if additional funding were provided. According to an Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (“AASHTO”) survey of State DOTs, States have more than 3,000 projects totaling \$17.9 billion which are ready-to-go and can be out to bid and under contract within 90 days.

Although I have heard the administration’s economists discount the stimulative effects of infrastructure investment, they may want to check with the State DOTs. In August, State DOTs informed the Federal Highway Administration (“FHWA”) that they had \$8 billion of highway projects that could advance before next week (September 30) if funding were available. Regrettably, FHWA only had \$1 billion available to distribute to the States through its August redistribution process.

Not only will these additional funds be put to use quickly, they will be put to **good** use, to meet urgent highway and bridge investment needs. For instance, consider the ready-to-go

projects of just one State DOT, Missouri. With funding provided by this bill, Missouri could accelerate repair work on the Brownville, Nebraska bridge over the Missouri River. The 1,903-foot bridge is 70 years old and is structurally deficient. The bridge has a sufficiency rating of 3, which is even lower than the rating of the I-35W Bridge which collapsed in Minnesota. This rating reflects such a serious condition that if its rating drops to 2, the bridge will be closed. If the bridge has to be closed, residents will have to make a 123-mile detour. Missouri could also accelerate the replacement of a structurally deficient and obsolete bridge with the construction of a new bridge over the Osage River at Tuscumbia, Missouri. The current bridge is a two-lane, 1,083-foot structure that is 75 years old and is also rated a 3 (serious condition). If this bridge has to be closed, residents will have to make a 40-mile detour.

For transit, the bill provides \$3.6 billion for capital investments, and \$1 billion for relief from high energy costs. Due to high gas prices, transit agencies across the country are experiencing increased demand for transit services, yet they are struggling to meet this demand due to the impact high fuel costs have had on their own operating budgets. In 2007, 10.3 billion trips were taken on public transportation – the highest number of trips taken in 50 years. Ridership has continued to climb in 2008, with a 4.4 percent increase in trips taken during the first half of 2008 compared to the same period last year, putting 2008 on track to beat last year's modern record ridership numbers. Additional funds could be put to immediate use by transit agencies to meet this demand while at the same time creating much-needed jobs and economic activity.

For Amtrak, the bill provides \$500 million. Similar to transit, Amtrak is experiencing record ridership and revenues in fiscal year 2008, and demand is growing across Amtrak's entire system for intercity passenger rail service. With this additional funding, Amtrak will be able to refurbish rail cars that are currently in storage and return them to service, and fund other urgently needed repair and maintenance of its facilities.

For the Airport Improvement Program ("AIP"), the bill provides \$600 million. This funding will allow the AIP program to keep pace with inflationary cost increases, and begin to address the investment gap in airport safety and capacity needs. Ready-to-go AIP projects that would be funded by this bill include runway and taxiway rehabilitations, extensions, and widening; obstruction removal; apron construction, expansion and rehabilitation; Airport Rescue and Firefighting equipment and facilities; and airside service or public access roads.

For environmental infrastructure, this bill provides \$6.5 billion for Clean Water State Revolving Funds ("SRFs"). Under this administration, funding for the Clean Water SRF program has been cut repeatedly and funding is now one-half of it what it was a decade ago, despite the fact that the needs continue to grow. These cuts have created pent-up demand in the States for project funding. In addition, wastewater treatment facilities must meet new treatment requirements, including requirements to control nutrients, sewer overflows, stormwater, and nonpoint sources. Aging infrastructure must be replaced or repaired. Additional funds could be put to immediate use in many States, creating family-wage construction jobs and economic activity. A recent survey by the Council of Infrastructure Financing Authorities and the Association of State and Interstate Water Pollution Control Administrators identified more than

\$9 billion in ready-to-go Clean Water SRF projects that cannot be funded within existing appropriation levels.

For the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the bill provides \$5 billion to invest in the nation's water resource infrastructure. This investment will provide jobs, help American products compete on the world market, reduce the risk that larger sums for disaster relief will be needed in the future, and restore precious ecosystems. For example, the infusion of additional construction capital could be used for the construction of the second 1,200-foot lock at Saulte Ste. Marie. If the second lock were completed, then the incident that occurred earlier this week would not shut down traffic between the Upper and Lower Great Lakes because there would be a second point of transit. The existing Poe lock (that failed) is the only 1,200-foot lock between the Upper and Lower Lakes.

Finally, I thank Speaker Pelosi, Chairman Obey, Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, and Chairman Olver, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies, for working with me throughout the development of this job creation package.

Throughout our nation's history, economic growth, prosperity, and opportunity have followed investments in the nation's infrastructure. From the "internal improvements" of the early 1800s – canals, locks, and roads – to the Interstate Highway System of today, infrastructure investment has been our foundation for economic growth. The investments funded by H.R. 7110 will not only create jobs today, they will provide long-term economic, safety, health, and environmental benefits.

I strongly urge to join me in supporting H.R. 7110, a true investment in America's future.

I insert in the record a series of tables prepared by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure majority staff that outline the State-by-State highway, transit, and clean water investments provided under H.R. 7110.