

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE PETER A. DEFazio
CHAIRMAN
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

HEARING ON
MAINTAINING OUR NATION'S HIGHWAY AND TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE

June 5, 2008

Our surface transportation system provides the backbone of our economy by moving people and goods and without a first-rate system our economy would suffer. In 2004 transportation-related goods and services contributed 10.5 percent to the U.S. GDP. That's \$1.232 trillion. And it's not just the economy that depends on transportation. In 2001, individuals traveled almost 3.8 trillion person-miles and on average spent 18 percent of the average household's total expenditures on transportation expenses. As our country's population and economy grows, these numbers will only continue to rise.

It is a fact of life that surface transportation systems have limited life spans and many segments of our network are reaching, and sometimes exceeding, their useful design life. Major portions of the interstate system are 40 to 50 years old. Some rail transit systems have been in service for 75 to 100 years and need total rehabilitation. Other newer transit systems are facing a critical first phase of modernization needs. Additionally, many of our bridges were built before World War II and during the Interstate construction era. The age of those bridges is a large part of the reason why twenty-seven percent of American bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

The impact of our aging network has a direct effect on Americans' everyday lives. According to a recent study by TRIP, 23% of the nation's major metropolitan roads have pavements in poor condition, resulting in rough rides that cost the average urban motorist \$413 annually in additional vehicle operating costs.

In its January report, the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission identified the deterioration from aging and use as "one of the greatest threats to the Nation's surface transportation network." In their most recent report card, the American Society of Civil Engineers cited the need to invest \$1.6 trillion to bring the nation's infrastructure up to good condition.

Clearly our maintenance needs are great and there aren't enough resources to invest in all of our assets at once. Our state and local governments are in the difficult position of having to make tough choices between important and necessary system expansions and critical ongoing maintenance to ensure these assets remain safe and reliable.

Our witnesses today are from state departments of transportation, public transit agencies, and other public entities responsible for maintaining transportation infrastructure. They are here to share their experiences with our maintenance backlog

and investment needs. As we prepare to rewrite our surface transportation laws next year, it is important to hear what strategies are working to meet maintenance needs and what can be improved upon.

I thank our witnesses for being here and look forward to their testimony.

###