

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

**SUBCOMMITTEE MARK UP OF THE**  
**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2009**

June 24, 2009

Today is a significant moment for surface transportation program reform. After nearly three years of preparation, including 36 hearings and briefings, we are holding the first mark up of the Surface Transportation Authorization Act of 2009. We have drafted a bipartisan, transformational surface transportation authorization bill that will move us into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

I would like to take a moment to honor the victims of the WMATA Metro crash. It was a tragic accident and I think I can speak for my colleagues when I say our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families. While the cause of the crash is still unknown, it is clear more investment is needed to improve safety and to bring our nation's transit rail systems up to a state of good repair. We must redouble our efforts to ensure transit agencies have the resources they need to avoid another terrible tragedy like the Metro crash.

As has been detailed in numerous recent reports, including reports of the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission and the National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Financing Commission, the quality of our transportation system is deteriorating. Decades of underinvestment have taken their toll. Almost 61,000 miles on the National Highway System are in poor or fair condition; more than 152,000 bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete; and the nation's largest transit agencies face an 80 billion dollar maintenance backlog to bring their rail systems to a state of good repair.

In response to the nation's infrastructure investment needs, we have crafted legislation that will significantly increase the amount we invest in our surface transportation network. While our \$450 billion bill is only a fraction of the \$2.2 trillion the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) estimates we need to be investing, our bill will provide a modest investment to make measurable improvements to our infrastructure backlog and to improve the average driver's daily commute.

However, more important than the cost of the bill are the reforms we are making to ensure our limited Federal transportation dollars are spent effectively and efficiently. Under this legislation states and metropolitan areas will be required to develop comprehensive, performance-based plans detailing how they will reduce congestion and greenhouse gas emissions, and they will be held accountable if they do not meet the goals established in their plans. States will be required to adopt flexible design standards to build "right-sized" projects that meet the needs of communities without overbuilding. We set parameters for public-private partnerships to ensure private investment protects the public interest. And we deliver a streamlined and efficient project delivery system so

that road and transit projects will take less time to complete, while still protecting the environment.

The Surface Transportation Authorization Act of 2009 provides clear national transportation objectives and holds states and local governments accountable for how they spend Federal transportation funds. We've crafted a bill that delivers on what the Obama Administration has said it wants – reform of the current programs, a metropolitan mobility initiative to reduce congestion and greenhouse gas emissions, accountability for how Federal transportation dollars are spent, and increased livability and quality of life for our communities. Additionally, our bill builds upon the Obama investment in high-speed rail and will create a National Infrastructure Bank to better leverage limited transportation dollars.

The Obama Administration proposal for an eighteen-month extension and temporary Highway Trust Fund financing fix will leave states without the predictable funding on which highway and transit projects rely. During the twelve extensions of TEA-21 before SAFETEA-LU was signed into law, states significantly pulled back on investments in highway and transit construction projects because of uncertainty regarding how much Federal funding the state would receive. We must finish this bill in 2009 so we don't disrupt the 2010 transportation construction season. Six million family wage jobs will be lost if we pass a temporary extension. And, an extension will negate any jobs created by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

While the Administration might think a transportation system that the ASCE gave a "D" grade is good enough, we know it is not. The status quo is not an option. Every day we delay this bill means another day the government denies the public the transportation system it deserves. The current surface transportation programs deliver process, not product.

The Administration says the auto industry is too big to fail. Well, our transportation system is too big to fail. This is a national crisis. We have a chance for real reform here; a real chance to partner with states and local governments to reduce sprawl and build more livable communities. We must seize this opportunity.

The Surface Transportation Authorization Act of 2009 provides the renewed vision, increased investment, accountability and reform America's surface transportation needs.

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