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America Needs Long-Term Funding for Transportation Projects
By [Author name]

America's transportation infrastructure system is inefficient, unsafe and in bad need of repair. Instead of addressing this pressing problem, Congress is content to enact a series of short-term extensions that make it impossible for states to plan for the future. It is time for Congress to develop a long-term solution for funding our highways, bridges and public transportation systems to drive economic recovery and protect our citizens.

Providing short-term funding for transportation infrastructure in the economic recovery bill and the HIRE Act was an important step that helped patch some of the most egregious holes in our transportation systems. But this money covers only a very small share of what is needed to maintain, modernize and expand highway and transit infrastructure, and it will run out before the job is done. Congress needs to follow through by tackling long-term planning and investment needs in the surface transportation bill before the end of this session.

Businesses depend on a transportation network that provides reliable, fast, safe and cost-effective performance. Transportation is also an important source of economic development by creating jobs across construction, engineering, and manufacturing sectors, which reinforces the economic foundation of our nation. Every \$1 spent on transportation infrastructure projects generates an additional \$1.80 of American GDP, so spending on worthy transportation projects has great potential to boost our economy.

Unfortunately, government at all levels has failed to make long-term investments in transportation and a deteriorating transportation system disadvantages our economy now and in the future. Any American traveling daily by car, bus or train sees first hand that our transportation infrastructure is failing to keep pace with the needs of a growing population and a growing economy. The longer we wait for Congress to act, the more expensive it will be to bring our transportation system up to acceptable standard.

In the near term, if we are to fix our aging infrastructure and make needed improvements, all funding options must be on the table, including an increase in the gas tax or other user fees. But Congress has to put a responsible package together, one that commits national resources to national priorities and ensures that dollars are spent wisely. For too long, short-term extensions have forced projects to stop and start, wasting time and money that should be used to achieve a cohesive national transportation plan.

Congress must focus on a long-term reauthorization plan before the end of this session. America's transportation projects and workers cannot endure another short-term extension that leaves states unable to commit to the needed infrastructure improvements. Our leaders in Washington must seize this critical opportunity to improve existing programs and increase investment in the nation's roads, bridges and transit systems for future growth.