KEY FACTS ABOUT AMERICA’S SURFACE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND FEDERAL FUNDING

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Roads and highways are the backbone of the U.S. transportation system, allowing Americans to travel approximately 3 trillion miles annually. But conditions on the system are deteriorating, as the need for transportation improvements far outpaces the amount of state and federal funding available. As the nation rebounds from the recession, making needed improvements to roads, bridges and public transit could provide a significant boost to the economy by creating jobs and stimulating long-term economic growth as a result of enhanced mobility and access.

Signed into law in July 2012, MAP-21 (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act), has improved several procedures that in the past had delayed projects, MAP-21 does not address long-term funding challenges facing the federal surface transportation program. Congress recently approved the Highway and Transportation Funding Act of 2014, an eight-month extension of the federal surface transportation program, on which states rely for road, highway, bridge and transit funding. The program, initially set to expire on September 30, 2014, will now run through May 31, 2015. In addition to extending the current authorization of the highway and public transportation programs, the legislation will transfer nearly $11 billion into the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) to preserve existing levels of highway and public transportation investment through the end of May 2015. Congress will need to pass new legislation prior to the May 31 extension expiration to ensure prompt federal reimbursements to states for road, highway, bridge and transit repairs and improvements.

Federal Funding for Our Nation’s Surface Transportation System Generates Jobs; Making Needed Highway Improvements Assures Economic Recovery and Growth

- Enhancing critical transportation assets will boost the economy in the short-term by creating jobs in construction and related fields. In the long-term these improvements will enhance economic competitiveness and improve the quality of life by reducing travel delays and transportation costs, improving access and mobility, improving safety, and stimulating sustained job growth.

- A Federal Highway Administration study concludes that for each $1 billion of federal spending on highway construction nationwide nearly 28,000 jobs are generated annually, including approximately 9,500 in the construction sector, approximately 4,300 jobs in industries supporting the construction sector, and approximately 14,000 other jobs induced in non-construction related sectors of the economy.

- The Federal Highway Administration estimates that each dollar spent on road, highway and bridge improvements results in an average benefit of $5.20 in the form of reduced vehicle maintenance costs, reduced delays, reduced fuel consumption, improved safety, reduced road and bridge maintenance costs and reduced emissions as a result of improved traffic flow.
Current Road and Bridge Conditions, Travel Trends and Traffic Congestion

- Fourteen percent of America’s major roads are in poor condition. Driving on roads in need of repair costs U.S. motorists $94 billion a year in extra vehicle repairs and operating costs – $444 per motorist.

- Twenty-five percent of America’s bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

- Forty-four percent of America’s major urban highways are congested. Traffic congestion costs American motorists $121 billion a year in wasted time and fuel costs.

- Vehicle travel on America’s highways increased by 38 percent from 1990 to 2012, while new road mileage increased by only four percent. The nation’s population grew by 26 percent from 1990 to 2009.

- Americans rely almost exclusively on motor vehicles for mobility. Travel in private vehicles accounts for 88 percent of all person miles of travel. Air travel accounts for eight percent of all person miles of travel, while transit (including buses and trains) accounts for one percent.

Roadway Improvements Can Save Lives and Reduce Traffic Crashes

- Roadway conditions are a significant factor in approximately one-third of traffic fatalities. There were 33,561 traffic fatalities in 2012 in the U.S. A total of 169,882 people died on U.S. highways from 2008 through 2012.

- The national traffic fatality rate is 1.13 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel. The fatality rate on the nation’s rural roads is disproportionately higher than that on all other roads (2.21 fatalities per 100 million miles of travel vs. 0.78).

- Motor vehicle crashes cost the U.S. $230 billion per year, $819 for each resident, in medical costs, lost productivity, travel delays workplace costs, insurance costs and legal costs.

- Where appropriate, highway improvements such as removing or shielding obstacles, adding or improving medians, widening lanes and shoulders, upgrading roads from two lanes to four lanes, and improving road markings and traffic signals can reduce traffic fatalities and accidents and improve traffic flow to help relieve congestion.

- According to a study conducted by the Federal Highway Administration, $100 million spent on highway safety improvements will save 145 lives over a 10-year period.

Data from the U.S Census, the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Congressional Budget Office and the Texas Transportation Institute was compiled and analyzed by TRIP, a nonprofit transportation research group based in Washington, D.C. Information is the latest available.