

NEWS RELEASE

Coalition of Northeastern Governors

CONEG Governors Call for Strong Federal Role in National Transportation System

Elect Governor Douglas and Governor Spitzer as 2008 Officers

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Washington, D.C. – The Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) today set out their vision for the future of the nation’s highway, transit and intercity passenger rail systems. Meeting with members of the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission, the governors called for a strong federal role and a national transportation system that will strengthen the American economy.

“Today, U.S. citizens and companies compete in a global economy. They are paying more for energy, and are concerned about the impacts of climate change,” said Vermont Governor Jim Douglas, CONEG chairman. “Our nation needs a balanced, integrated transportation system that works – one that will strengthen our economy by providing affordable access to jobs and markets; encourage responsible use of energy and land; and contribute to lower carbon emissions.”

The governors identified a number of priorities that Congress should include in federal surface transportation policies. These include a national transportation system, a stable and increasing source of federal transportation funding, particularly for highways and transit; national policies for goods movements and passenger rail; a strong focus on rural highway safety; and greater coordination among transportation systems, energy use and land development.

The governors laid out a vision for expanded and improved intercity and commuter rail service throughout the Northeast. They called for the Northeast Corridor and passenger rail to be a larger part of the solution to the region’s congested highways and airports. “The Northeast has the nation’s most complex, heavily used passenger rail corridor, said New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine, CONEG Lead Governor for Transportation. Governor Corzine continued, “We must increase investment in the passenger rail corridor and make smarter use of this important resource as we tackle the region’s growing transportation needs. We call upon the federal government and Amtrak to work with us to improve the Northeast Corridor infrastructure and passenger services that will lead to a doubling of ridership.”

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The governors elected Governor Douglas and New York Governor Eliot Spitzer to lead the organization as Chairman and Vice Chairman in 2008, and set their agenda for joint action. Governor Corzine (NJ) will lead the governors' efforts to communicate the region's interests in authorization of federal surface transportation and intercity passenger rail legislation. Working with Governor Deval Patrick (MA), the governors will also turn their attention to how transportation and renewable energy can be part of the climate change solution. Governor John Lynch (NH) will guide CONEG's activities to support the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

The Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) is a non-partisan organization through which the Northeast Governors work together on transportation, energy and environmental issues affecting the Northeast. CONEG offers the Governors a regional voice in Washington, D.C. and a forum to exchange information, develop innovative solutions, and take cooperative actions that benefit the region. The CONEG Governors are: Governor Jim Douglas (VT); Governor Eliot Spitzer (NY); Governor M. Jodi Rell (CT); Governor John Baldacci (ME); Governor Deval Patrick (MA); Governor John Lynch (NH); Governor Donald Carcieri (RI); and Governor Jon Corzine (NJ).

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