

September 27, 2004

The Honorable James M. Inhofe  
Chairman  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
United States Senate  
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-6175

The Honorable Don Young  
Chairman  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2165 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-6256

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban  
Affairs  
United States Senate  
534 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-6075

The Honorable James Oberstar  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2163 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-6256

The Honorable James M. Jeffords  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
United States Senate  
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-6175

The Honorable Paul Sarbanes  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs  
United States Senate  
534 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-6075

Dear Chairmen Inhofe, Shelby and Young, and Ranking Members Jeffords, Sarbanes and Oberstar:

As Congress continues to consider reauthorization and extension of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21), the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) would like to share with you several items of particular concern to our States. We understand the challenges confronting Congress in providing for the current and future needs of the nation's transportation systems, and appreciate your leadership throughout this difficult process.

The CONEG Governors believe that a six year bill that provides the States with predictable and robust funding for highways and transit, and that maintains the effective and proven program and funding structure of TEA-21, is the ultimate objective. However, we recognize that the pending expiration of the current program requires timely action on another extension. Therefore, we urge Congress to act on an extension that enables the States to manage transportation programs with minimal disruptions to programs and projects during the transition to a multi-year reauthorization period.

We urge Congress to act on an extension that:

- Maintains the current highway and transit program structure as the basis for providing funds to States, particularly the existing core highway programs - Interstate Maintenance, National Highway System, Bridge Program, Surface Transportation Program, and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality – and the historic balance of highway and transit programs within the Highway Trust Fund;
- Provides an extension of up to 12 months to avoid negative impacts on construction programs, transportation decision-making, safety improvements and funding agreements that can occur with short-term extensions;
- Maintains the commitment to preserving the firewalls and the General Fund guarantees for the highway and public transit programs to ensure that States have the funding predictability to meet transportation needs during this transition period; and
- Establishes a National Transportation Policy Study Commission that will begin a much-needed coordinated examination of the nation’s future surface transportation and revenue needs.

We also recognize that the Highway Trust Fund faces immediate pressures in meeting current highway needs. Various legislative proposals currently before the Congress would provide full credit to the Highway Trust Fund for federal excise taxes collected on ethanol fuels. We urge Congress to act promptly to ensure that these revenues can be provided to the Highway Trust Fund.

We appreciate your consideration of these concerns.

Sincerely,

/o.s./

John E. Baldacci  
CONEG Chairman  
Governor of Maine

/o.s./

Donald L. Carcieri  
CONEG Vice-chair  
Governor of Rhode Island

*Identical letters were also sent to Senate Finance Committee Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Baucus, and to House Committee on Ways and Means Chairman Thomas and Ranking Member Rangel.*