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Congressman Olver Opening Remarks

Amtrak Hearing

President Joseph Boardman

10:00 am, April 7, 2011

The Federal Highway Administration's \$70.5 billion Fiscal Year 2012 budget request reflects an understanding that an ambitious investment in our transportation infrastructure is needed to maintain our economic competitiveness in the global marketplace.

Yesterday, during his testimony, Secretary LaHood stated that the Eisenhower Interstate Highway System is the model for the world and that we must maintain this system as we expand our transportation options. I fully agree with his statement and believe that the highway system is the back bone of our economy. Unfortunately, it is well documented that there is an annual investment gap of \$27 billion to maintain our current system of highways and bridges in a state of good repair and an annual gap of \$96 billion to expand the system to meet the needs of a population that grows 10% each decade.

In addition, there was a good discussion at yesterday's hearing with most members of this subcommittee agreeing that the funding levels provided in SAFETEA-LU were wholly inadequate in 2005 and certainly would not meet current needs. It is generally understood that every dollar of maintenance deferred this year will catch up to the next generation in the form of structurally deficient bridges, broken roads, and an economy choked by congestion.

Furthermore, the question of how we fund a robust highway program came up time and again, but few specific solutions were offered. The simple truth is that while we can debate the pro's and con's of various revenue models, we must first all agree that a revenue increase is needed to maintain a viable transportation system. This will require tough political votes with cooperation across the aisles and between legislative bodies, but I am committed to working with my colleagues to see a robust infrastructure program enacted.

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