

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, September 7th, 2011 Press Contact: Ryan Nickel (202) 225-3481

WASHINGTON, D.C., September 7th-- House Appropriations Committee Ranking Democratic Member Rep. Norm Dicks made the following comments after release of the FY2012 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill text:

“The Republican leadership has presented a subcommittee bill with a completely inadequate funding level that ignores both our nation’s jobs crisis and the drastic need for infrastructure investment.

“We were all discouraged to see the most recent jobs report that indicated no job growth for the month of August. With stimulus funds exhausted; federal agency budgets either reduced or frozen; and state and local governments laying off workers in record numbers, many economists have warned of a potential double-dip recession.

“In response, the Republican majority has once again decided to double down on its bogus ‘cut and grow’ economic theory and has proposed a bill that drastically slashes infrastructure funding. The last thing this economy needs is more bad news, yet the Republican Leadership is proposing a cut to highway and transit funds that would result in layoffs of nearly 600,000 construction workers. This is mindless budget slashing. The American Society of Civil Engineers gives our road and highway infrastructure a “D-” while economists, organized labor, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce concurs that infrastructure investments are immediately necessary. However, the Majority proposes highway funding at levels not seen since 2000.

“We should be sending paychecks to American construction workers instead of unemployment checks at this critical time.

“The bill also strikes a devastating blow to public transportation and passenger rail programs. Local transit agencies will have to defer replacing old rolling stock, equipment and facilities. Our nation’s growing cities will have to wait even longer for federal assistance to help build new subway, light rail and commuter rail systems to help relieve the congestion that is already choking our highways. The bill terminates the President’s initiative to provide high speed rail to corridors around the country and makes deep cuts to Amtrak. These cuts will jeopardize short distance routes that are funded in cooperation with states and serve nearly a third, or roughly 9

million, of Amtrak's annual passengers.

"Housing funding also comes under the ax in this bill with no funds at all provided for the HOPE VI and Choice Neighborhoods programs. HOPE VI funding goes entirely toward construction. Funding would mean jobs and ultimately better public housing for those communities. Also the Republicans continue to refuse to fund Housing Counseling Assistance to low-income renters and home buyers, helping them avoid homelessness, foreclosure, and providing sound advice on reverse mortgages, purchasing a home and avoiding predatory loans.

"However, I do appreciate that Chairman Latham has addressed a few priorities from our side of the aisle such as fully funding the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program which provides much needed long-term housing to homeless veterans. The bill also ensures that critical aspects of the Federal Aviation Administration's critical Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen) program will move forward, such as FAA's program to improve data communications between controllers and pilots; modernization efforts for terminal facilities; and FAA's system-wide information management system which will help set up a system architecture for the efficient operation of NextGen programs. The bill also provides an increase in funds for the FAA's alternative fuels program which will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the aviation sector.

"Despite these gestures, I strongly urge my colleagues to oppose this bill. As our economy struggles and unemployment remains stubbornly high, I will not support a bill that completely disregards the jobs and infrastructure crisis in this country."

Below is a brief summary of funding amounts and other key provisions in the Transportation, HUD bill:

Total Bill: \$55.15 billion | \$217 million below the FY2011 enacted level | **\$19.81 billion below** the President's FY2012 Request.

Federal Highway Administration: The bill provides \$27.0 billion total, *\$11.7 billion below* the FY2011 enacted level and *\$42.0 billion below*

the President's request.

Federal Transit Administration: The bill provides \$7.04 billion total, *\$2.97 billion below* the FY2011 enacted level and *\$15.3 billion below* the President's request.

Amtrak: The bill provides \$1.125 billion total, *\$357 million below* the FY 2011 enacted level and \$3.275 billion below the President's request.

Air Traffic Control Modernization: The bill provides \$2.798 billion for the Federal Aviation Administration's facilities and equipment program, *\$71.75*
million above
the FY 2011 enacted level and *\$321.75 million below* the President's request.

Airport Grants: The bill provides \$3.35 billion for the FAA's airport improvement program, *\$165 million below* the FY 2011 enacted level and President's request.

Public Housing Capital Fund: The bill provides \$1.53 billion total, *\$508 million below* the FY2011 enacted level and *\$873 million below* the President's request.

Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH): The bill provides \$75 million total, *\$25 million above* the FY2011 enacted level and equal to the President's request.

PROGRAMS NOT FUNDED IN THE BILL

National Infrastructure Investments (TIGER): The bill eliminates funding for the Department of Transportation's popular TIGER grant program. TIGER was first created in the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act for multi-modal transportation projects designed to improve the movement of passengers and freight. The President requested \$2 billion in FY 2012 for the TIGER program.

High Speed Rail: The bill terminates the funding for the high speed rail program. The President requested a total of \$4 billion in FY 2012 to continue the development of a high speed rail network in the United States. □ □

HOPE VI & Choice Neighborhoods: Grant programs to revitalize public housing in mixed-income neighborhoods. As well as providing quality low-income housing, the vast majority of these funds create needed construction jobs.

Interagency Council on Homelessness: The USICH enhances the Federal Government's response to homelessness by enhancing coordination between agencies- addressing duplicative programs and identifying best-practices.

Housing Counseling Assistance: □ Provides grant funds to local non-profit agencies for reverse mortgage, rental, home pre-purchase and foreclosure prevention counseling.

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