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## **TRANSPORTATION FOR AMERICA: Though a Worthy Down Payment, Stimulus Raises Urgent Need for New Transportation Vision**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The transportation spending priorities in the stimulus bill conference report passed by the House of Representatives today are a significant departure from the status quo and ought to represent the leading edge of a major new thrust in our national infrastructure policy. The Senate is expected to pass the conference report as soon as tonight.

Given the need for haste in crafting the bill, congressional and Administration negotiators were handcuffed by backward-looking, existing programs even as they tried to shape investments for a future of reduced oil dependency, greater opportunity for Americans to join the middle class and cleaner transportation choices. Despite some shortcomings resulting from current transportation law, Congress has adopted a bill that if properly enacted by state and local authorities, could be a down payment on a new direction for America's infrastructure:

- \$27.5 billion allocated to the traditional highway program that should go a long way to restoring our transportation networks to a state of good repair. Unfortunately, Congress neglected to include language ensuring highway money is prioritized to fix crumbling roads and bridges, so now the onus is on state and local governments to ensure these funds are not spent improperly.
- Unprecedented flexibility for spending "highway" funds on ports, transit, passenger and freight rail or other projects as national, state or regional needs may require.
- A significant share of transportation dollars directed to local decision makers and metropolitan regions rather than state departments of transportation.
- \$8.4 billion for public transportation, recognizing the strong and growing demand for transit service. However, none of these funds can be used to prevent cuts in service and jobs at transit agencies suffering from massive budget shortfalls. It is up to Congress to ensure this gap is filled in upcoming appropriations negotiations.
- \$9.3 billion for intercity and high-speed passenger rail, an encouraging indication that Congress realizes how important it is to expand alternatives to our overburdened highway and aviation networks.
- The inclusion of up to \$825 million for projects that will make our streets safer for walking and biking, providing help for commuters who have increasingly turned to these alternatives to save money and increase their physical activity.

When President Obama signs the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, it will provide a down payment on the transportation investment needed to get our economy moving. But the urgency of recreating our national transportation program to address the challenges of the future is more starkly clear than ever. Now Congress

and the Obama-Biden administration must begin consideration of the successor legislation to the expiring SAFETEA-LU law — our current, 1950s-era federal transportation program. This critically important legislation must provide a new 21<sup>st</sup> Century vision for investment in our transportation system that is safer, healthier, cleaner, more equitable and smarter so that our nation can compete and thrive in the future economy.

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**About the Transportation for America Campaign**

Transportation for America is a broad coalition of housing, environmental, public health, urban planning, transportation and other organizations focused on creating a 21<sup>st</sup> Century national transportation program. T4's goal is to build a modernized infrastructure and healthy communities where people can live, work and play by aligning national, state, and local transportation policies with an array of issues like economic opportunity, climate change, energy security, health, housing and community development. [www.t4america.org](http://www.t4america.org)