



JOHN A. KITZHABER, MD
Governor

February 15, 2012

The Honorable Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress
1502 Longworth
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Blumenauer:

It is encouraging to see Congress bring long-term surface transportation authorization legislation to the floor of both the House and the Senate this week for the first time since the expiration of SAFETEA-LU nearly two and a half years ago. This is an important recognition that transportation investments are critical to creating jobs and improving the economy, as well as building stronger and safer communities.

However, I have serious concerns with a number of provisions included in HR 7, the American Energy and Infrastructure Jobs Act. Beyond the issues related to drilling for fossil fuels in sensitive areas, the bill steps backward in a number of important areas of transportation, standing in stark contrast to the forward-looking proposal for rebuilding our nation's infrastructure that the President released on Monday.

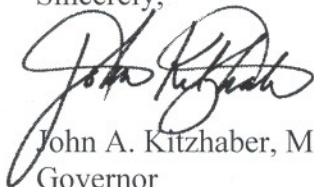
- After nearly 30 years of including public transportation in the multimodal Highway Trust Fund, this legislation would take away all fuels tax revenue currently invested in transit. Under this bill, transit programs would rely on a one-time transfer to the Alternative Transportation Account, which isn't even guaranteed. And after the one-time transfer runs out, transit would have absolutely no long-term dedicated funding, putting Oregon's transit systems at risk of serious cuts. This could threaten the mobility of tens of thousands of Oregonians, many of whom rely on transit as their primary means of getting around because they cannot drive. In Oregon's urban areas, transit plays a critical role, adding capacity to the transportation system to help move freight and people more efficiently. Similarly, cuts to Amtrak and to intercity passenger rail funding would move us further from our goal of providing more energy efficient transportation options.
- Oregon has shown that investments in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure are not mere recreational projects; they are important parts of the transportation system that can help take cars off the road, reduce the need to pay for costly road projects, cut energy consumption and promote healthy lifestyles. Unfortunately, HR 7 would reduce the federal government's commitment to building active transportation infrastructure. With

rising fuel prices and tight household budgets, it is the wrong time to turn away from transit, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure investments that reduce our dependence on foreign oil and create jobs while improving America's transportation systems.

- The federal government should play an important role in helping states pay for major projects that promote the nation's economic competitiveness but are simply too big for the states to build on their own. SAFETEA-LU included a Projects of National and Regional Significance Program that would help pay for projects that address critical chokepoints in the nation's transportation system, including the I-5 Columbia River Crossing. Unfortunately, HR 7 eliminates this program, making it difficult for states to address major freight bottlenecks that impede the movement of goods.
- At a time when Oregon's need for investment in transportation projects to enhance our trade-based economy and foster economic development is growing, HR 7 would reduce the state's federal transportation funding. In 2011, Oregon received \$518.7 million in federal highway funding; in 2013 under HR 7, the state's funding would fall to \$473.2 million, an 8 percent reduction. This is nowhere near the level needed to improve our transportation system.
- Oregon has proven that regulatory streamlining can deliver transportation projects more quickly and at reduced cost while improving environmental outcomes. Unfortunately, HR 7 goes about regulatory streamlining the wrong way, exempting most projects from NEPA review and classifying all projects within the right-of-way as categorically excluded from NEPA, regardless of their impacts.

As the House of Representatives takes up HR 7, I am grateful for the efforts you have undertaken to address these and other flaws in the bill. I hope that in the end Congress will be able to produce a bipartisan transportation bill that will begin the important task of reinvesting in America's infrastructure.

Sincerely,



John A. Kitzhaber, M.D.
Governor

JAK/LP/ap