

DRIVING AHEAD

VOLUME 4/ISSUE 1, 2008

A bi-monthly newsletter of the
American Highway Users Alliance

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FEDERAL FRONT

Highway Users Testifies Before Senate Committee

The Senate and Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee convened a hearing on February 6 to closely examine the Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Commission's report, *Transportation for Tomorrow*. The Highway Users was one of only three associations invited to testify before the EPW Committee.

President and CEO Greg Cohen emphasized The Highway Users' agreement with the majority of the commission that Congress should authorize a strong, focused federal program designed to meet national safety and mobility objectives. "It is our view that a shrinking federal role would seriously damage the integrity of the National Highway System, create dangerous imbalances in road and bridge quality from state-to-state, and severely impact the future flow of commerce," he said.

Cohen remarked the commissioners agreed that current programs were not meeting national goals and should not be reauthorized in their current form. The Highway Users agreed with this fundamental call for reform and called for the end of the unfocused 'TEA' program structure in-place since 1991.

The commission report advocated creation of a performance-based program that meets ten defined national objectives, including congestion relief, improved freight mobility, and safety, among others. We applauded the decision to develop key priorities and require benefit-cost analyses, but we did not endorse the specific ten objectives recommended by the Commission.

The Highway Users forcefully objected to the "stove-piped" intercity rail program recommendation, designed to massively increase highway users' subsidies for rail

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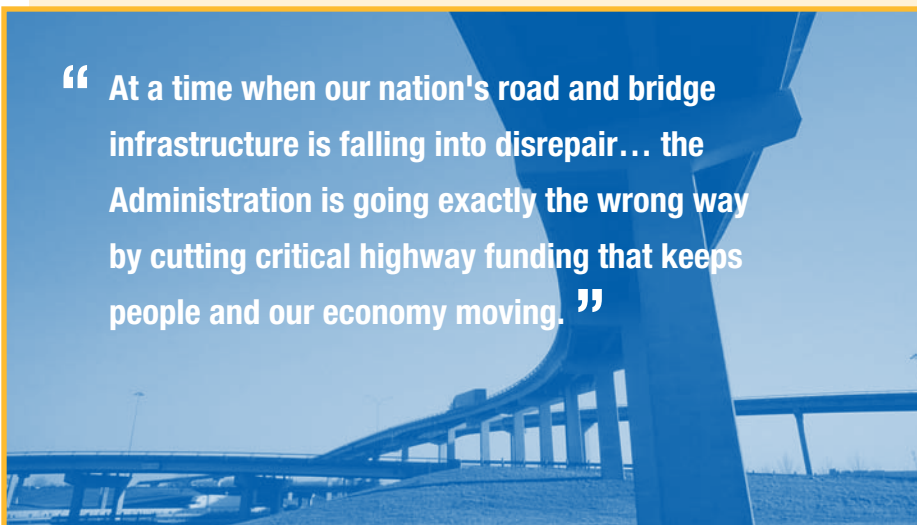
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projects. The program would exempt rail projects from undergoing benefit-cost analyses that would likely favor bus-based transportation.

Of critical concern to EPW Committee Chairman Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and the other Senators at the hearing is whether transportation advocates can generate enough support to create wide-scale public approval for the 2009 highway bill. We offered to work closely with the Committee to develop a strong yet reformed bill that deserves public support. All of our members, their contacts, employees, friends and families, will be needed to get a good bill enacted into law. To read Cohen's testimony or view the hearing online, log onto www.highways.org. ■

The final recommendations were approved by nine of the twelve commissioners, with three dissenting. The Highway Users had testified before the commission last March, and we were pleased to see many of our key recommendations – streamlining, congestion relief, safety, freight mobility, and programmatic reform – included in the report. Critical to the public interest are the sections of the commissioners' report that relate to the need to focus on national priorities, use benefit/cost analyses in project selection, create incentives for the states to achieve highway safety and mobility performance objectives, and diversify revenue sources into the Highway Trust Fund while increasing traditional highway user fees. Highway Users' members volunteering on our Planning and Government Affairs (PGA) committee were essential in developing our positions on these key issues. ■

“ At a time when our nation's road and bridge infrastructure is falling into disrepair... the Administration is going exactly the wrong way by cutting critical highway funding that keeps people and our economy moving. ”



White House Budget Slashes Highway Funding

On February 4, the Bush Administration released its budget proposal for fiscal year 2009. The budget proposed a \$1.9 billion cut in highway funding, a return of Congressionally-rejected diversions of highway user fees to NHTSA, and no serious revenue proposals to shore-up the ailing Highway Trust Fund. The budget includes a statement encouraging greater tolling and public-private partnerships to fund future highway improvements. The Highway Users reacted immediately and

critically to the budget in a press statement, which was picked up by the influential Capitol Hill daily *CQ Today* and mainstream press nationwide.

Highway Users President and CEO Greg Cohen stated, “At a time when our nation's road and bridge infrastructure is falling into disrepair, congestion is stifling our economy and quality-of-life, and Americans are concerned about a potential recession, the Administration is going exactly the wrong way by cutting critical highway funding that keeps people and our economy moving.” To read our official press release, log onto www.highways.org. ■

Transportation Revenue Commission Unveils Its Final Report

On January 15, the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Commission released its long-awaited report, *Transportation for Tomorrow*. The Highway Users was present at the release of the report at the National Press Club. We issued a statement of appreciation for the commissioners' hard work and approval for many of the concepts in the report. Following the press conference, Highway Users' staff met with national, local, and trade press to discuss our views of the report in depth. We also testified before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on the commission report's findings – see cover story for more details.

Developing Alternatives for Funding Highway Programs

On February 1, the "second" commission authorized under SAFETEA-LU, also known as the National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Finance Commission, issued an interim report that included no recommendations but a variety of options for financing future highway programs. The commissioners have no budget for hearings and have instead asked interested persons to send comments on the interim report. The Finance Commission report can be viewed at <http://financecommission.dot.gov/>. The Highway Users is preparing comments for the commission and we encourage our members to do so as well. ■

Opposing the New Jersey Toll Proposal

The Highway Users and our partners in Americans for a Strong National Highway System, are opposed to New Jersey Governor Corzine's plan to transfer authority over the New Jersey turnpike by creating a public benefits corporation that would sharply increase tolls and transfer the state's debt burden onto the new corporation. In effect, current and future generations of motorists and truckers would be expected to pay for New Jersey's crippling debt and non-transportation programs. ■

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Pennsylvania Eyes Leasing Turnpike

Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell and the Pennsylvania legislature are viewing their apparent failure to place tolls on Interstate-80 as an opportunity to resurrect a failed plan to lease the Pennsylvania turnpike to private investors. Like New Jersey's plan, toll increases would not be based on benefits to turnpike users. Instead, tolls would be raised to create revenue for projects elsewhere in the state, including the financially failing mass transit systems in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. The Highway Users opposes excessive tolls, diversion of toll revenue, and the imposition of tolls on toll-free Interstate highway lanes. ■

Your Chance to Influence Policymakers

The Highway Users is updating its Candidate Binder – *The Road to Congress*, which is designed to educate candidates on highway issues. Decisions made by elected officials in 2009 are expected to have the biggest impact on national highway funding levels and priorities since the establishment of the Highway Trust Fund in 1956. The binder will include valuable state-by-state data on critical needs and will help candidates understand public sentiments about transportation. Don't miss your chance to be a part of this important Congressional project!

Participation Details:

contact us at info@highways.org or at 202.857.1200.

Sponsorship Opportunities:

include such added benefits as prominent exposure and multiple copies for your advocacy use. Contact gregcohen@highways.org. ■



Renew Your Membership: Stay Connected!

Your continued support of The Highway Users is vital for our continued success representing the interests of motorists and others whose business depends on highways. Whether large, mid-size or a small organization, all members make a difference in enhancing our collective strength and in developing and delivering the critical messages about transportation and other public policies on Capitol Hill, the media and elsewhere.

Highway Users Chairman Gov. Bill Graves and Honorary Chairman Sec. Norman Mineta sent membership renewal notices with dues invoices on February 1, 2008. Your membership renewal by March 31, 2008 is appreciated and timely payment helps reduce administrative costs. ■

ROADWAY SAFETY FOUNDATION



ATSSA Requests Endorsement of Roadway Safety Plan

On February 9, Highway Users and Roadway Safety Foundation staff attended the American Traffic Safety Services Association's (ATSSA) annual meeting. President Greg Cohen was a featured speaker at the ATSSA Government Relations Committee meeting. ATSSA has developed a comprehensive "Towards Zero Deaths" plan for roadway safety and has asked The Highway Users to endorse elements of their plan. To read the plan, please visit www.atssa.com. Please share your views with us as we consider which elements of ATSSA's plan to endorse. ■

RSF/FHWA Publish Best Practices Safety Guide

Roadway safety countermeasures and best practices employed in 11 states are producing favorable results in combating roadway hazards. Winning programs of honorees in the 2007 National Roadway Safety Awards Program co-sponsored by the Roadway Safety Foundation and the Federal Highway Administration are posted on the RSF web site. Visit www.roadwaysafety.org and click on "2007 Best Practices."

If there are hazards in your state or region, consider directing state officials to the National Roadway Safety Awards Best Practices for potential solutions in operational areas, program planning, development and evaluation or infrastructure improvements. New ways of thinking about roadway hazards are making a difference in those states. Help RSF spread the word about effective solutions to roadway hazards that can save lives. ■

What's Ahead

Upcoming Meetings

- **April 3, 2008:**
Highway Users Board Meeting.
Details to be announced.
- **October 29, 2008:**
Annual Meeting ■



The American Highway Users Alliance is the broadest-based transportation coalition in Washington, DC, focused exclusively on promoting highway system performance, roadway safety improvements and freedom of mobility.