

# DRIVING AHEAD

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Official newsletter of the  
American Highway Users Alliance

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## FEDERAL FRONT

### The Highway Users Promotes Safety at Senate Hearing

**On** April 14, Highway Users President and CEO Greg Cohen testified before the Senate Environment & Public Works Committee on opportunities to improve highway safety. Chairman Boxer announced that the hearing would be the final authorization hearing before the Committee releases its bill, to be called MAP-21. The Highway Users was the only organization invited to both the first and last EPW Committee hearing on the highway bill. Chairman Boxer commented on the longstanding value of The Highway Users to the Committee and asked for our help in developing the safety provisions of the bill.

**“Most highway deaths  
can be prevented.”**

Cohen focused testimony on safety needs that could be met with robust funding of the highway portion of the bill and emphasized that a larger, more effective safety core program should be part of the highway title. He pointed out that improving the road and roadside environment could prevent most highway deaths. Cohen also discussed the important work of the Roadway Safety Foundation and urged the Committee to increase its funding.

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### Great Media Coverage of New Study on Economic Impact of Snowstorms

The Highway Users recently released an economic study examining the costs of road-paralyzing snowstorms in diverse states across America. The study, conducted by IHS Global Insight, gives needed perspective on the true costs of what is often thought of as harmless and fun. For state and local authorities, the report is serving as a wakeup call on the dangers of cutting budgets to clear icy and snowy roads.

The report examined both the direct and indirect economic impacts caused by snow closures, including lost hourly wages, sales and income tax revenue, and business impacts for restaurants, service stations, and stores.

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**HIRE Act Enacted, Restores Funding Cuts, Helps Hwy Trust Fund, Extends SAFETEA-LU**

On March 18th, President Obama signed the first Jobs Bill of 2010, the Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment (HIRE) Act. The bill garnered bipartisan support from across the political spectrum, restoring billions in rescinded highway funds and six months of billion-dollar cuts in federal aid to the states. It also restored 12 years of lost interest on the cash balances in the Highway Trust Fund and stabilized funding for highway projects and programs through the end of the calendar year.

The Highway Users staff worked hard to promote final passage of the bill, despite the political paralysis that has come to be expected from the U.S. Senate. Through press releases and interviews we engaged the media and raised awareness in Congressional offices through many lobbying visits. We issued numerous *Legislative Alerts* and *Legislative Updates* to our grassroots network and Facebook fans to urge Congress to support the bill. The Highway Users thanks its grassroots army for taking aggressive action to protect highway funding. The HIRE Act is the first of the “jobs bills” expected to be debated by Congress this year. We will continue to keep our members apprised of any new legislation that could increase highway investments. ■



**Transportation Industry Leaders Urge Highway Funding Protection**

The Highway Users, along with numerous transportation organizations, sent a letter to Senators Kerry, Graham and Lieberman asking for 100% of any fuel tax revenues from their climate bill to be deposited into the Highway Trust Fund. In the letter, we argued that the bill should not disconnect the tie between fuel taxes and the trust fund and raised concerns that a climate bill that raises the fuel tax but does not deposit it into the Highway Trust Fund would

**Capitol Hill Visits with Congressional Offices**

The Highway Users has been meeting nonstop with various elected officials and their staffers to discuss critical transportation issues over the past several weeks. In the past month we have met with Members and staff from the following offices: Sens. Baucus, Boxer, Voinovich, Thune; and Reps. Oberstar, Mica, Duncan, Boucher, Hagan, Cohen, and Etheridge. ■

make passage of a robust highway bill impossible. The letter notes that failure to pass the surface transportation bill would not only harm our economic competitiveness, it will impair the ability of states, counties, and cities to reduce transportation-related carbon emissions. The Kerry-Graham-Lieberman climate bill is expected to be released on April 26th. ■

**Raising the Red Flag on USDOT’s Livability Agenda**

The Highway Users attended multiple hearings focused on USDOT’s livability initiative. We are concerned that “livability” has been poorly defined, programs associated with the term are biased against automobility, and the divisiveness of the issue threatens to derail public support for increased highway user fees in a new authorization bill. The President’s FY 2011 budget proposal calls for withholding \$500 million in highway funds normally distributed to the states and using them for livability planning grants that would be awarded at Secretary LaHood’s discretion. In addition, the budget calls for the creation of a \$4 billion fund to be earmarked by DOT for livable community projects. In related news, DOT Secretary Ray LaHood has stated this is “the end of the era of favoring motorized transportation over non-motorized modes of transportation” and has issued a policy statement that encourages states to de-emphasize solutions to traditional highway needs. Obviously this is of great concern to the motorized transportation users who pay for the lion’s share of DOT programs. Highway Users President & CEO Greg Cohen has blogged about our objections to these policies in the widely read *National Journal* transportation experts’ blog. We are raising the issue with Members of Congress and explaining that the Administration’s priorities devalue the importance of personal freedom and economic growth. The Highway Users will always champion the cause of automobility. ■

## Senate Safety Hearing..... cont. from page 1

In addition to discussing the larger authorization bill, Cohen suggested three specific bills for the Committee to advance. First, the Surface Transportation Safety Act of 2009 (S. 791), introduced by Transportation & Infrastructure Subcommittee Chairman Max Baucus, which would improve work zone safety standards and permit states to order proprietary safety products. Second, as a member of the Rural Infrastructure Safety Coalition (RISC), The Highway Users supports the High Risk Rural Road Safety Act. This draft legislation would help reduce more than half of all traffic fatalities that occur on rural roads. Finally, The Highway Users supports the Older Driver and Pedestrian Safety and Roadway Enhancement Act (H.R. 3355). This bipartisan legislation would fund a roadway safety enhancement program for older drivers and pedestrians. (See story on page 4)

Cohen also testified on the importance of primary seat belt laws and ignition interlocks for repeat DUI offenders. We asked the Committee to ensure that any federal sanctions or incentives developed should address these issues carefully in a way that does not reduce funding for road safety improvements.

To read the full testimony, log onto [www.highways.org](http://www.highways.org).

## Highway Authorization Bill Crawls Forward

There have been many recent developments on the authorization bill front. In a surprise announcement, Committee Chairman Boxer stated that the bill drafted by the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee would serve as the starting point for the Senate bill. Typically, each chamber writes a completely independent bill from the other and works out the differences in a conference committee. Chairman Boxer's announcement followed Majority Leader Reid's assurance to Senator Voinovich that the highway bill will receive a vote in the Senate "this year." Unfortunately, there still has been no progress on raising revenue to fully fund the bill.

In response to the apparent desire for progress in the Senate, we are carefully reviewing the provisions in the House draft so that we can assist both the House and Senate in moving forward with a good bill. Highway Users' members serving in the authorization task forces have already compared the House bill with our proposal and this work has been invaluable to staff. We continue to promote an authorization bill that is performance-based and accountable to users, grows highway programs on a par with other transportation modes, ensures that highway user fees continue to be protected and guaranteed, and includes new capacity as a national priority. ■

## Economic Impact of Snowstorms

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**Being prepared for the worst snow storms actually saves government agencies more money in tax revenue...**

The study also reinforced the expensive consequences of pressure faced every day by state and local authorities to cut costs when faced with unstable federal-aid for highways. With slow progress on a six-year highway bill, the study drove home another cost of inaction to the media and public.

Guest speakers joined us at the release event at the National Press Club, representing the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington, and the owner of a local Exxon station in Washington DC. The news conference garnered significant coverage from many venerable media outlets including CNN, ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC affiliates nationwide and local radio stations WMAL and WTOP. The CNN story, in particular, was widely re-printed and posted on news sites across the country.

The study found that hundreds of millions of dollars in economic opportunity and tax revenue are lost each day that a state is shuttered by

impassable roads. Being prepared for the worst snow storms actually saves government agencies more money in tax revenue than it costs to clear impassable roads.

To read the press release or access the study, log onto [www.highways.org](http://www.highways.org). ■





## Highway Users Welcomes New Members

The Highway Users is pleased to welcome two new national trade associations as members. The National Petrochemical and Refiners Association signed up as a Sustaining Member and the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association joined as a National Advocate Member. Welcome to both and thanks for your support.

Help us expand our outreach and grassroots support! Open the door for us to contact prospective members who should be involved. Please contact the Membership Office at 202.857.1200 with leads. ■

### What's Ahead

#### SAVE THESE DATES!

Upcoming Highway Users' Members Meetings in Washington, DC

- Next Business Meeting – June 23, 2010. Details coming soon.
- 2010 Annual Meeting – October 12, 2010

### HIGHWAY SAFETY

## Keeping Older Drivers Safe

The Highway Users has joined the Coalition for Older Roadway Users' Safety (CORUS) and is working with AARP, the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATTSA), and others to promote a safety bill – H.R. 3355 – sponsored by Rep. Jason Altmire (D-Penn). The legislation is designed to improve the safety of roads and pedestrian crossings in areas with a high percentage of senior drivers and pedestrians. Projects that are eligible for funding under this bill include improved intersections, interchanges, and other roadway segments; systemic roadway safety improvements; and elimination of hazards on qualifying road sections. The Highway Users looks forward to working with our partners to enact H.R. 3355 or incorporate it into the next highway authorization bill. ■

## Making Safety Our Top Priority with ATSSA

Highway Users President & CEO Greg Cohen joined the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA) at their 2010 Annual Meeting in San Antonio. Specifically, Cohen attended and provided advice to the Government Relations Committee and discussed The Highway Users' participation in CORUS and the Roadway Infrastructure Safety Coalition (RISC). He also was a featured speaker at ATSSA's Public Affairs Committee meeting, on behalf of the Roadway Safety Foundation (RSF). Cohen discussed the community safety initiatives RSF has piloted in Michigan, Delaware, and South Carolina. RSF was chartered by The Highway Users as an educational, charitable organization in 1995. ■

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Note: Officers are also members of the Executive Committee and Board of Directors. (See page 1)