

U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works

STATEMENT OF SENATOR BARBARA BOXER Los Angeles Field Briefing September 4, 2008

Thank you, everyone, for joining me here today to discuss the next authorization of the Federal highway, transit, and highway safety programs. This legislation will impact all Americans because it sets the policy and provides funding for surface transportation nationwide.

The current authorization bill will expire on September 30, 2009. As Chair of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, I am leading the effort to develop the new transportation bill.

The Committee has already begun the authorization process by holding several hearings in Washington, D.C. We will continue to hold hearings, meetings, and listening sessions to make sure all points of view are considered.

I am here today to hear from Californians about their priorities so that I can incorporate them into our legislation. I will leave the record open for two weeks following this briefing so those who are not testifying can submit testimony in writing.

I have been working with the leadership of the Environment and Public Works Committee to develop a set of principles for the next bill. These principles include:

- Maintaining the National character of the interstate and federal highway system
- Efficient movement of people and goods (including intermodal)
- Safety (including condition and design of infrastructure)
- Reducing congestion and its impacts
- Sustainable funding (Trust Fund Including Alternatives)
- Consolidating programs substantially to refocus the program
- Establishing funding and performance criteria

These principals are reflected in the title for the bill, "MAP 21" (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century).

One of my primary goals for this bill is to improve air quality. All of these goals are critical to improving the quality of life and flow of commerce in California and across the Nation.

Nowhere is the need to improve goods movement more obvious than in California. For example, 45% of all containerized cargo destined for the continental U.S. passes through California's ports.

The high volume of cargo truck traffic has a huge impact on roads and communities in California. Freight handled by trucks is projected to double by 2035. Traffic through West Coast ports alone could nearly triple over the same period.

Not only does congestion cost time and money due to delays, it is a major contributor to increased transportation related pollution.

The movement of goods has a serious impact on air quality and global warming. Freight transportation is still largely driven by fossil fuel combustion. With that combustion comes emission of greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, and particulate matter.

According to the California Air Resources Board (CARB), approximately 75 percent of diesel particulate emissions in California are related to goods movement.

In addition, CARB has attributed 2,400 premature deaths to diesel emissions, and estimates that the cumulative health costs of diesel emissions from 2005 through 2020 are an astonishing \$200 billion dollars.

Reducing congestion will improve air quality and public health. We need to find a way to reduce congestion while our population is growing and placing new and greater demands on the existing transportation systems.

According to the Census Bureau, by the middle of the Century, the Nation will have grown to 420 million people from the 300 million mark hit in 2007. This equates to 11 new Los Angeles metropolitan areas and a population increase of 50 percent in 50 years nationwide.

In addition to addressing congestion and improving our transportation systems, the transportation projects included in our bill will create good jobs and stimulate our economy. According to the Federal Highway Administration, every \$1 billion in Federal funding for highways supports 35,000 jobs.

Another challenge that must be addressed in the next bill is that the Highway Trust Fund, which funds the legislation primarily through gas tax receipts, is expected to run out of funding before the end of the 2009.

The tragic bridge collapse in Minneapolis demonstrated the need to increase investment in infrastructure, not decrease it. The discussion of funding options will be a key element of the next bill.

We have great challenges before us. It's time to start rebuilding America. Investing in our transportation infrastructure helps America compete in the global economy and maintain our quality of life. It is that basic.

At the end of the day it's a matter of setting the right priorities and crafting innovative and effective means to address them. The next transportation bill provides an opportunity to take a fresh look at these programs and make the changes necessary to ensure our transportation system will meet the Nation's needs in the coming years.

I look forward to hearing your perspectives and working with you in the year ahead.

###