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BUSH ADMINISTRATION INTRODUCES A PLAN FOR AMERICA'S

TRANSPORTATION FUTURE: On July 29, the Bush Administration introduced a plan that it believes would provide the direction needed for the future vitality of the country's transportation network.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters announced the plan that she believes will refocus, reform and renew the national approach to highway and transit systems in America.

The 80-page report, entitled **Refocus. Reform. Renew. A New Transportation Approach for America**, is an outline the Administration hopes will be considered by Congress during next year's debate on the next six-year transportation bill. The current SAFETEA-LU bill expires in September 2009.

The Secretary said the plan sets a course for reforming the nation's transportation programs by:

- Outlining a renewed federal focus on maintaining and improving the Interstate highway system, instead of diverting funds for wasteful pet projects and for programs clearly not federal priority areas like restoring lighthouses.
- Addressing urban congestion and gives greater flexibility to state and local leaders to invest in their most needed transit and highway priorities.
- The plan allows local leaders to have greater freedom and significantly more resources to fund new subways, bus routes or highways as they choose, based on the needs of local commuters instead of the dictates of Washington.
- The plan would create a Metropolitan Innovation Fund that rewards cities willing to combine a mix of effective transit investments, dynamic pricing of highways and new traffic technologies.
- The plan calls for greatly reducing over 102 federal transportation programs which have proliferated over the last two decades replacing them with eight comprehensive intermodal programs that will help focus instead of dilute investments and cut the red-tape forced upon local planners.
- The plan is a refocused and redoubled emphasis on safety, using a data and technology-driven approach that also gives states maximum flexibility to tackle their toughest safety

challenges. Using a data-driven approach states must continue focusing on issues that put drivers, commercial drivers, passengers and pedestrians at risk, including crashes involving drunk drivers, motorcycles, work zones and rural roads.

- To improve the current 13-year average it takes to design and build new highway and transit projects in the United States, the federal review process would be streamlined to ask the same stringent environmental and planning questions, but get answers more quickly.

The Secretary emphasized that central to any reform for transportation is finding new revenue sources to supplement the unpredictable and unsustainable gas tax in order to fund maintenance and pay for new needed projects. The Secretary believes the gas tax is an antiquated mechanism, underscored by the current climate of high gas prices. Americans are driving less and taking advantage of transit options, but less driving also results in less revenue for transit operations.

Secretary Peters said more direct pricing options like tolling are needed and states must be empowered to take advantage of the over \$400 billion available worldwide for infrastructure investments from the private sector.

HOUSE COMMITTEE TO STUDY ETHANOL MANDATE: On July 28, Speaker of the House, Rod Jetton, announced the formation of an interim House committee that will review the impact of a law that mandates the usage of ethanol.

Rep. Charlie Schlottach (R-Owensville) will spearhead the study group called the House Interim Committee on Emerging Issues in Agriculture.

A final report is expected by the end of this year.

DON'T FORGET TO VOTE: On Aug. 1, Secretary of State, Robin Carnahan, announced that a predicted 31 percent of Missouri's registered voters will turn out for the Aug. 5 primary election. This prediction is a compilation of the local turnout estimates submitted to the Secretary of State's office by the election authorities in each county. If the 31 percent estimate is met, more than one million votes will be cast in the primary.

The August 5th Primary Election is next Tuesday. Don't forget to exercise your right to vote!!!