



C O N N E C T I C U T

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 13, 2012

State Lawmakers to CT Delegation: We support you – support us.

Hartford, CT – State lawmakers released a letter to Connecticut’s Congressional Delegation today supporting their efforts to extend the Federal Highway Trust Fund and asking the lawmakers to take the fight one step further.

“Your leadership in Washington could help redirect over half a billion dollars from a dubious new initiative to clear and urgent maintenance demands,” **said Senator Joe Markley.**

Senators Markley, Jason Welch and Representatives Whit Betts and Rob Sampson penned the joint letter to the Connecticut Delegation in the hopes of garnering support from the statewide elected officials. Of the 5,250 highway bridges in the state of Connecticut it is estimated that nearly 1,800 are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. A portion of the letter reads:

“Years of neglect have resulted in a highway system which threatens our economic vitality and motorist safety. With that in mind, we urge you to join our effort to divert funds from the New Britain to Hartford busway project so that they might instead be used to repair our existing transportation system.

“Most of the \$567 million currently budgeted for the busway is under state control and could easily be directed to more pressing needs; with your leadership, we believe most of the remaining federal money might also be put to work repairing our roads and bridges.

“That work is essential to the safety and prosperity of our constituents. The busway is not; polls show that it is deeply unpopular, and projections indicate it will be a large and increasing cost to our state.”

“In these challenging times, we must carefully prioritize our transportation spending,” **said Sen. Welch.**

“Here in Connecticut we have our very own Transportation Commissioner telling us crumbling bridges are his nightmare,” **remarked Rep. Betts.** “How can our roads and bridges be in such bad shape – yet we allow a nearly \$600 million dollar busway to move forward? “

The federal bill being debated would cut Connecticut's share of the federal transportation funding by an estimated \$400 million. The current funding bill expires at the end of March.

Congress has noted the Federal Highway Trust Fund, which pays for highway and transit programs, is going broke. A new Congressional Budget Office forecast estimates the government will have to delay payments to states beginning sometime in the 2013 federal budget year, which could force some projects like the busway to shut down.

“Let us not be foolhardy with our hard-earned taxpayer dollars. As elected officials representing our state in Washington D.C., you have a responsibility and are tasked with making sure each and every one of our tax dollars is spent wisely,” **said Rep. Sampson.**

Recent remarks made by Connecticut transportation leaders and U.S. Representatives re: crumbling bridges and roads.

1. *"This particular bridge (Saugatuck Avenue Bridge, Route 136, in Westport) in Fairfield County is rated the worst and the standards by which they use to make these judgments, this bridge has the lowest score in Fairfield County," said Rep. Jim Himes.* (
2. *"The bill that we're debating today is \$400 million under what Connecticut's current allotment is just for roads and for mass transit," explained Rep. Murphy. "That number represents dozens, if not hundreds of road projects, that aren't going to get done. It represents dozens of bridges like the one we're standing in front of that won't get repaired."*
3. **Congressman Chris Murphy** stood in front of two of our states' most deficient bridges one in New Milford and another in Thomaston calling for help to pay for repairs. According to Congressman Murphy, *"Connecticut's bridges are in dire need of repair: of the state's 5,250 bridges, 1,779 are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete—some 34 percent," (Housatonic Times, Dec. 29, 2011) and (WFSB.com, February 9, 2011)*
4. **Department of Transportation (DOT) Commissioner James Redeker** at a Transportation forum, "bridge maintenance ... is my nightmare," and said the state's statistics on bridge maintenance are starting to look more like they did before the Mianus River Bridge collapse. *(New Haven Register, January 20 2012)*
5. At Gov. Dannel P. Malloy's November commissioners meeting **Redeker said**, the bridges are the agency's "biggest challenge," pointing to how the number of outstanding problems to fix had grown from 531 just 11 years ago to about 2,000 today. *(Associated Press, January 20, 2012)*
6. *"It's just the aging infrastructure, particularly in New England. It's a major challenge and we're addressing it," Redeker said. "But the problem continues. So, this is going to be a major focus of how we work and we invest our resources, because we can't wait."*(Associated Press, Dec. 31, 2011)
7. **DOT Chief Engineer, Thomas Harley said**, *"We do in fact have a decreasing condition of bridges."* (Associated Press, Dec. 31, 2011)

Contact: 860-240-8865

(Attached: Copy of the Letter to the CT Delegation)

State Senator Joe Markley
Legislative Office Building Suite 3400
300 Capitol Ave.
Hartford, CT 06106

March 13, 2012

U.S. House of Representatives
John Larson
221 Main St. 2nd Floor
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Congressman Larson,

We were heartened by your recent call to extend the Federal Transportation Trust, which provides funding to repair our roads and bridges. We agree that the fund is essential, and our needs in Connecticut are acute. Years of neglect have resulted in a highway system which threatens our economic vitality and motorist safety.

With that in mind, we urge you to join our effort to divert funds from the New Britain to Hartford busway project so that they might instead be used to repair our existing transportation system. Most of the \$567 million currently budgeted for the busway is under state control and could easily be directed to more pressing needs; with your leadership, we believe most of the remaining federal money might also be put to work repairing our roads and bridges.

That work is essential to the safety and prosperity of our constituents. The busway is not; polls show that it is deeply unpopular, and projections indicate it will be a large and increasing cost to our state. Your leadership in Washington could help redirect over half a billion dollars from a dubious new initiative to clear and urgent maintenance demands.

In these challenging times, we must carefully prioritize our transportation spending. We know you agree, and we hope to hear from you soon on this proposal.

Thank you for your consideration.

Joe Markley
State Senator, District 16

Whit Betts
State Representative, District 78

Jason Welch
State Senator, District 31

Rob Sampson
State Representative, District 80

cc: U.S. Sen. Joe Lieberman, U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney, U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro,
U.S. Rep. Jim Himes, U.S. Rep. Chris Murphy