

A SAFER ROAD TO TOMORROW

July 2009 Newsletter

U.S. Government Gears Up For Reauthorization

With New Hampshire's highway funding settled for the short-term, the Federal Highway Administration is gearing up for its next reauthorization. Or is it? Although the Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Representative James Oberstar, has vowed to pass legislation by September, the Secretary of Transportation, Ray LaHood has called for an extension of the current authorization. LaHood's reasoning for this suggestion is to keep the Highway Fund from running dry.



However, Oberstar and his committee have pushed forward, issuing their blueprint for the next reauthorization; citing that extending the current authorization could conflict with the investment from the stimulus funds. The blueprint encompasses investment in more than just highway, including plans for rail, and improving metropolitan mobility. The investment will total to almost \$450 billion, and is dispersed as follows:

- \$337.4 billion for federal highways (increase of \$110 billion)
- \$99.8 billion for transit (increase of \$47.3 billion)
- \$50 billion towards rail initiatives (funded outside the Highway Trust Fund)

In addition to funding, the blueprint includes several objectives to manage the direction of transportation policies and aid states in carrying out its mission. The Act also contains the

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The State Budget Provides Short-Term Relief for Highway Funding



As drivers swerved to avoid potholes and treaded cautiously on broken roads, the legislature was charged with providing funding to patch those holes. Initially, funding was proposed through House Bill 644, increasing the road toll. However, as the House received the budget, they retained that bill, and instead inserted increasing the road toll into the budget. The House felt that the road toll increase could finance the highway trust fund for about ten years. The increase would be phased in over three years, making it a long term solution. This would dramatically fix New Hampshire roads and create jobs, easing unemployment in these tough times.

The House passed the budget to the Senate Finance Committee, where it seemed that the committee was going to adopt the House's highway funding plan. With the committee ready to vote on the budget terms, the Governor took to the airwaves and proclaimed that he would veto any budget that contained an increase in the road toll. The committee was then forced to finance the highway fund through another option, so they proposed a series of toll increases across the state, and increasing car registration fees.

This proposal passed the full Senate, and the budget headed to a Committee of Conference to be finalized. However, the Executive Council did not seem to be in favor of increasing tolls across the state. The Conferees entered into discussions with few options left to provide revenue for the highway fund. The Committee of Conference emerged with

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TO TOMORROW

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Safer Road Partners

Associated General Contractors of NH

The Associated General Contractors is a non-profit trade organization of general contractors, subcontractors, and industry professionals dedicated to improving industry standards.

NH Good Roads Association

NH Good Roads Association is a non-profit trade organization established to encourage the development of a safe, efficient and environmentally sound highway transportation system.

Safety and Health Council of Northern New England

The Council's mission is to educate and promote safety & health policies, practices and procedures that prevent and mitigate human economic losses arising from unintended causes.

NH Association of Chiefs of Police

The Association secures a closer relationship among commanding officers all over the state, to encourage a cooperative relationship among all police officials.

NH Lodging & Restaurant Association

The Association is a non-partisan organization to promote, protect and educate the food service and lodging industries and to ensure positive business growth for our members.

Business & Industry Association

The Association is NH's leading business trade association. It advocates for business interests with state and federal legislators and regulators.

BIA Luncheon Highlights Need for Highway Funding



On April 16 of this year, the Business and Industry Association (BIA) held a luncheon to discuss funding options for NH's

highways. During the event, several notable speakers emphasized the need for highway funding, U.S. Representative Paul Hodes, NH DOT Commissioner George Campbell, State Representative David Campbell, and Pike Industries President Christian Zimmermann. Safer Roads was a sponsor of the event, along with the Associated General Contractors of NH and the Municipal Association.



Highway funding was addressed in the State's Budget, House Bill 2. See page 1 for the story on the budget outcomes.



Move Over It's the Law

Summer is here; it's the season for warm weather and road trips to the beach. Warm weather also means more road construction and maintenance. The presence of road crews usually indicates a shift in the normal traffic pattern, closed lanes, or reduced speed, all things that drivers should be aware of during their travels.

However, as a few road crews found out in May, that is not always the case. Three separate incidents occurred where drivers failed to slow down and recognize the construction zone, causing accidents and thousands of dollars worth of damage. These accidents are not only monetarily costly, but could cost a person their life, or their quality of life. More often than not, the person who will suffer most is the driver.

In response to the accidents, and in attempt to prevent more, the NH Department of Transportation (DOT) held a press conference on June 8 to illustrate the needs of driver attentiveness in work zones. The DOT Commissioner, George Campbell, spoke about the need to keep his road crews, as well as drivers, safe while sharing the road. Emphasizing the "move over" law, speakers said it was imperative for drivers to maintain reduced speeds, and if possible, move over to avoid road crews and emergency responders who may be stopped.

Drivers new and old should be aware of the road crews this summer, maintaining a reduced speed through work zones, and keeping these safety tips in mind:

- Expect the unexpected, and dedicate your full attention to the road
- Turn on headlights so that workers and other drivers can see you
- Be especially alert at night while driving in work zones
- Minimize distractions
- Anticipate lane shifts, and merge when directed to do so
- Don't change lanes unnecessarily
- Expect delays, especially during peak travel times
- Maintain a safe distance between your car and construction workers, trucks, equipment and traffic barriers



Accidents on the Rise: Police Step Up Enforcement

The number of fatal accidents has continued to climb, and NH is no exception to that statistic. These accidents usually occur because of alcohol, drugs, speeding or a combination of interfering factors. In an effort to tackle this problem head on, police officers around the state are stepping up their patrols, and looking for drivers who are not obeying the rules of the road.

Through an increased presence, police will be patrolling the motorways utilizing a zero-tolerance policy, meaning no warnings will be given. The police and the Highway Safety Agency will be enforcing three high-visibility campaigns to catch law evaders, and deter others from committing the same mistakes. Peter M. Thompson, the state Highway Safety Agency coordinator, said the agency is declaring war on those that refuse to obey the rules of the road.

To aid the campaigns, the state Bureau of Liquor Enforcement will be employing their new mobile command center. The command center will be used at sobriety check points across the state and has a breathalyzer, a field sobriety test area, and video and audio recording equipment on site. The command center also houses jail cells, and will be run by liquor enforcement officers and a drug recognition expert.

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creation of Infrastructure banks. These metropolitan banks will provide federal assistance for local transportation projects.

The objectives of the Reauthorization are:

- Create a National Transportation Strategic Plan
- Improve the safety of the surface transportation network
- Bring existing highway and transit facilities and equipment to a state of good repair
- Facilitate goods movement
- Improve metropolitan mobility and access
- Expand rural access and interconnectivity
- Lessen environmental impacts from the transportation network
- Improve the project delivery process by eliminating duplication in documentation and procedures
- Facilitate private investment in the national transportation system that furthers the public's interest
- Ensure that States receive a fair rate of return on their contributions to the Trust Fund
- Provide transportation choices
- Improve the sustainability and livability of communities



The House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee (Highways and Transit) has passed this legislation. The road to reauthorization will be long, as this legislation competes for visibility with other top bills, and faces strong opposition. However, the Highway Trust fund needs to be financed, whether it is through a Reauthorization, or an extension of the current Authorization remains to be seen.

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a short-term plan for funding, increased vehicle registration fees and an increase in the Hampton toll, which had already been approved. A portion of the revenue would go to municipalities and the Betterment fund. The vehicle registration fee increase will only be effective for two years, from July 1, 2009 until July 1, 2011. The increase in vehicle registration fees will be based on the weight of the vehicle, with most standard passenger cars seeing an increase of \$30, however for vehicles of greater weight the increases are as follows:

- Vehicles 5,000 lbs to 10,000 lbs \$45
- Vehicles 10,000 lbs to 26,000 lbs \$55
- Vehicles 26,001 lbs to 73,280 lbs \$75



Fifty million dollars of revenue from the Hampton toll also go to the highway fund over two years (\$30 million in year one and \$20 million in year two). The Conferees recognized that this short-term solution will need to be replaced by a long-term one in the future. The Conferees have decided that a study committee will be created to study future sustainable revenue sources for funding improvements to state and municipal highways and bridges. The committee will consist of five participants, and they must report their findings and any recommendations for proposed legislation by November 1, 2010.

No Texting Allowed



Beginning January 1, 2010 it will be illegal to text while driving. The legislature passed House Bill 34 earlier this month, and it has received

the Governor's signature. Initially this bill was not going to pass, but when news broke about the Boston T driver who crashed while texting, it was reconsidered.

Originally this bill prohibited the use of cell phones in any capacity, except by emergency personnel. The bill also prohibited driving with an animal on the driver's lap, and mandated the use of headlights when windshield wipers are on during inclement weather. The law that eventually passed states, "A person operating a moving motor vehicle who writes a text message or uses 2 hands to type on or operate an electronic or telecommunications device is guilty of a violation. A person does not write a text message when he or she reads, selects, or enters a phone number or name in a wireless communication device for the purpose of making a phone call." A fine of \$100 will be issued for any person found in violation of this law.

Transportationtv.org Gets a Face Lift

Transportationtv.org has unveiled a brand new look to for its site. The added features will make the site more user friendly and interactive. One new feature, "Voices of Transportation" will feature Brian Deering from the Associated General Contractors of America in its first installment. The Senior Director of Highway and Transportation Division of the organization spoke about the pressing need to address the future of transportation through new federal legislation.

Transportationtv.org was launched in February 2009 and was created to be the place where transportation users, decision makers, and reporters turn to, to find the right information. The site has five channels dedicated to transportation, and receives commentary from top transportation officials, like Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and Congressman Jim Oberstar.



Stimulus Projects Continue in NH

As stimulus news continues to come in, NH is at the forefront of putting that money to work. NH was one of the first in the nation to use it, receiving a visit from the Transportation Secretary, Ray LaHood. Projects will be announced over throughout the year and into the next. To keep up to date on the latest status of the stimulus, visit NH's stimulus website at www.nh.gov/recovery.





A Safer Road to Tomorrow
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Safest State For the Second Time in 2009

No. 1: New Hampshire

New Hampshire is ranked No. 1 for the second time thanks to impressively low crime across the board. It boasts the nation's lowest murder rate and second-lowest aggravated assault and burglary rates.

Rankings in Crime (out of 50 states)
 (1 = Worst, 50 = Best)

- Assault:** 49
- Burglary:** 46
- Murder:** 50
- Motor Vehicle Theft:** 48
- Rape:** 38
- Robbery:** 43



Source: The results of **CQ Press's** annual Crime State Rankings are in. They ranked the safest states for 2009. States are compared against the national average for six crimes, each carrying equal weight.

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