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LEGISLATIVE ALERT!

(202) 637-5057

February 15, 2012

Dear Representative:

With unemployment remaining at unacceptable levels and the state of America's infrastructure in serious decline, Congress's top priority should be to produce bipartisan surface transportation legislation that is focused on putting millions of Americans back to work rebuilding our nation's infrastructure. Instead, H.R. 7 goes down a partisan path that will destroy thousands of jobs, undercut our nation's commitment to mass transit, and weaken America's global competitiveness. As a result, the AFL-CIO cannot support this bill in its current form.

Historically, the surface transportation bill has been one of the few legislative priorities that unified our nation around the shared goal of putting people to work improving communities across America, from small towns to big cities. This year, unfortunately, the House leadership has abandoned any pretense of working together with the minority and has assembled a partisan bill that is almost certain to delay passage of a multi-year reauthorization.

Among the most egregious breaks with the past practice is the way this massive piece of legislation is funded. Instead of providing a guaranteed funding stream based on the concept of user-pays, H.R. 7 would make up the shortfall in the Highway Trust Fund with a \$45 billion raid on federal employee pensions, which would be cut by as much as 40 percent for new hires. Federal and postal employees have already contributed more than their fair share toward reducing the deficit and we will vigorously oppose any effort to treat government workers as though their livelihoods were a piggy bank to fund other federal priorities.

At the same time, the bill would jeopardize future funding for all public transportation by delinking transit programs from the Trust Fund, ending an arrangement that has been in place for over 30 years. H.R. 7 would eliminate thousands of Amtrak jobs, including 2,000 food and beverage service workers. The bill would require the privatization of at least 20 percent of all bus service lines and mandate the contracting out of state engineering, design, and mapping services. It would also roll back critical safety rules for workers engaged in the movement and handling of hazardous materials. To benefit a handful of companies, the bill would eliminate overtime and minimum wage protections for thousands of workers at businesses that provide transportation between worksites.

The AFL-CIO believes that passing a multi-year surface transportation bill this year will require the House leadership to engage the minority in an effort to craft a bipartisan bill. The process must be inclusive, and funding provisions for the bill must not pit one group of Americans against another. Further delay will mean longer unemployment for millions of Americans and the continuing deterioration of our roads, bridges, and transit systems.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William Samuel', written in a cursive style.

William Samuel, Director
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT