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Highway Funding Issues Demand Political Action

One of my prime responsibilities as your chairman is to travel the country and participate with our members in our various zone meetings. These meetings are PCI's version of a community town hall. It is through these gatherings that we have an interplay of new directions, ideas, and at times frank discussions of your concerns. This process is invaluable in helping us determine the future direction and priorities of your organization.

As we consider our future, I am pleased to report that the Senate has approved an amendment to S. 1173 (ISTEA II) that increases the authorization levels in this six-year program by \$26 billion. The amendment increases the total authorization for the highway program from \$145 billion to \$171 billion. During the debates on ISTEA II (Intermodal Surface Transportation Act), the Senate leadership has agreed to a formula that gives each state a minimum of 91 cents for every dollar paid into the Highway Trust Fund.

These funding levels are authorizations included in the highway reauthorization legislation. To ensure that these additional funds are actually spent will require annual battles with the Appropriations Committees. Nevertheless, the authorization levels included in the legislation are significant improvements over the current law.

Yet our work is not done. Our industry, as a participant in the highway construction market, has a vital interest in this legislation. It is imperative that we continue to take a proactive stance regarding this reauthorization.

I'd like to suggest that each and every one of you raise your voice to your representatives in the House. Contact your Representative and ask that they support H.R. 2400 (BESTEA), which will renew a priority to distribute

available funds from a projected budget surplus. Congress must legislate that all highway user fees be invested to maintain and improve our nation's transportation infrastructure. Highway user fee revenue can support up to a \$32 billion annual investment.

When you contact your Representative, be sure to emphasize these points:

- Conditions — Road and bridge conditions continue to deteriorate, and congestion continues to worsen while unspent revenue in the Highway Trust Fund continues to grow.
- Safety — Road and bridge improvements reduce accidents and save lives.
- Economic benefit — Investment in highways promotes development, which has led to elimination of Federal budget deficits. Continued economic growth and the competitiveness of American businesses and workers cannot be sustained without increased transportation investment.
- Fairness — Highway users pay fuel taxes that are intended to be used to maintain and improve our roads and bridges. In fairness to these taxpayers, these user fees must be used for their intended purpose.

If you would like more details, contact our Government Relations Consultant Cy Malloy at (301) 340-2275.

I urge you to seize this opportunity; your voice can make a difference. This seemingly small action on your part can indeed help you and our industry in shaping our future.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Q. D. Spruill, Jr.