



# LOUISIANA GOOD ROADS & TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION, INC.

## GOOD ROADS ALERT

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### HIGHWAY BILL EXPIRES – Where Do We Go From Here

The Highway Transportation Bill expired several months ago and the funding for highway and transit projects is in limbo. The programs operate on short-term extensions granted by Congress.

The result is that long term highway programs and particularly construction take a hit since funding levels are uncertain. Extensions are generally at the same level as current funding, which means no increase in program funding for states that have already fallen behind the curve of maintaining roads and transit at the current levels. With inflation increasing the value of the dollar continues to decrease. In Louisiana the 16 cents of fuel tax originally approved as part of the Highway Trust Fund is now worth about seven cents.

There is the funding debate between highway construction interests and the transit and the many other program supporters.

Then, of course, is the big question – will the Highway Bill operate with a long series of extensions or will a new Bill be drafted soon, and how long will it be in effect. The just-expired Bill was good for six years.

The final issue seems to be whether the new Bill will provide additional funding or not. The Federal Highway Trust Fund is suffering just like the ones in other states. With inflation, the value of the Federal fuel tax is also shrinking. There have been discussions about raising fuel taxes or tolling the Interstate Highway System or developing a new mechanism called VMT taxes. In the VMT tax, drivers pay a fee based on the miles they drive.

Various organizations associated with transportation interests, including the Louisiana Good Roads and Transportation Association support:

- Quick action by Congress
- Increased Funding

It is important that you let your Congressional representatives know your feelings about the time frame passing of the Highway Bill and what is in it.

### METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION OFFICIALS SPEAK TO GOOD ROADS GROUP



*On the left is David Creed, Director, North Delta Regional Planning & Development District, Monroe; in the middle is Walter Brooks, Regional Planning Commission, New Orleans; and on the right is Leo Marretta, South Central Planning & Development Commission, Gray, LA.*

At a Good Roads Goals and Objectives Committee lunch, several representatives of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) from around the State spoke to the group. They outlined the role of the MPO with regard to the State's transportation program.

The MPO's were developed several years ago through the Federal Highway Program and exist in all states. They cover the largest urbanized areas in each state and Louisiana has eight of them. Any Federal funding for transportation programs in these areas must go through the MPO for approval. Usually there is a Technical Advisory Committee that consists of agency representatives within the urbanized area that develop a list of projects in conjunction with the MPO staff. This list is then forwarded to the Transportation Policy Committee, which is made of parish and city representatives within the urbanized area for their review and approval.

### LGRTA ANNUAL MEETING

The LGRTA Annual Meeting and Annual Board of Directors Meeting will be held on Thursday, January 7, 2010. This meeting is open to all members of LGRTA.

The LGRTA Board Meeting will be held at 11:00 AM and open to Board Members only. The General Meeting will immediately follow the Board Meeting.

Both meetings will be held at the Baton Rouge Country Club on Jefferson Highway in Baton Rouge, LA.

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## ROUGH ROADS COSTING MOTORISTS HUNDREDS MORE PER YEAR

A report released by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and TRIP (The Road Information Program), shows that driving on rough roads costs the average American motorist approximately \$400 a year in extra vehicle operating costs. Drivers living in urban areas with populations over 250,000 are paying upwards of \$750 more annually because of accelerated vehicle deterioration, increased maintenance, additional fuel consumption, and tire wear caused by poor road conditions.

***Rough Roads Ahead: Fix Them Now or Pay for It Later***, reports that one-third of the nation's major highways, including Interstates, freeways, and major roads, are in poor or mediocre condition. Roads in urban areas, which carry 66 percent of the traffic, are in much worse shape.

The report uses the latest government statistics to show pavement conditions in all 50 states and vehicle operating costs by state and urban areas. The report also finds that:

- 30 to 60 percent of the roads in 20 of the nation's largest urban areas are in poor condition.
- 36 percent of the roads in the Detroit urban area are in poor condition. In contrast, the Los Angeles area and surrounding communities have 64 percent of their roads in poor condition.
- 61 percent of rural roads are in good condition.
- 72 percent of the Interstate Highway System is in good condition, but age, weather conditions, and burgeoning traffic are eroding ride quality.

The full report from AASHTO and TRIP is available at <http://roughroads.transportation.org>.

## TOO MANY MILES OF STATE ROUTES

A recent article in New Orleans City Business discusses the issue of the number of miles of State routes that LaDOTD is responsible to maintain. According to Eric Kalivoda, assistant secretary for the Louisiana DOTD, Louisiana has 16,687 miles of state-owned roads. He has reportedly indicated that he would like to transfer 5,000 of these miles to Parish ownership.

To offset this change in ownership, he would increase the Parish Transportation Fund, which divvies out state money to parishes for roads and public transit. The fund is at \$46 million. He would add about \$60 million per year.

## MORE FUNDS FOR LOUISIANA DOTD

A Motion passed by the Louisiana Streamlining Government Advisory Group on September 29, 2009 for consideration by the full Streamlining Commission:

### **MOTION**

The State of Louisiana has a \$12.5 billion backlog in road construction and maintenance. The Louisiana Streamlining Government Commission recommends to the governor and the Louisiana Legislature that 75% of the money in Louisiana's Capital Outlay Program be spent on road construction and maintenance through the existing priority program for each year of the next 5 years.

The Louisiana Commission on Streamlining Government's Advisory Group on Efficiency and Benchmarking adopted a recommendation at its September 21, 2009 meeting:

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- Eliminate tolls on the Crescent City Connection Bridge. Tolls on the Crescent City Connection Bridge in New Orleans would be eliminated on December 31, 2012, when the bonds supported by the tolls will be paid off. Eliminating the tolls will discontinue the current toll collection practice and management, which is incurring more administrative costs than the amount of tolls collected.

## WORKING WITH DOLLARS

LADOTD has indicated that they have reduced the backlog of work from 14 billion dollars to 12 billion dollars. No matter how the numbers are calculated, it would take approximately 20-24 cents increase in Louisiana fuel tax to cover this backlog over 20 years.

\$12 billion - amount DOTD is "in the hole"  
4.4 million - estimated Louisiana population  
\$2720 per every person to cover the \$12 billion  
\$136 per every person per year for 20 years to cover \$12 billion

One cent raises about \$25 million in gasoline tax.  
\$500 million over 20 years raised with one cent  
24 cents needed to raise \$12 billion

Driver drives 15,000 miles per year.  
20 mpg yields 750 gallons per year  
750 gallons yields \$7.50 per year per 1 cent fuel tax  
\$7.50 yields \$150 over 20 years per 1 cent fuel tax

4 million vehicles estimated in State  
Would raise \$30,000,000 per year  
Over 20 years this would raise \$600,000,000  
24 cents would actually raise \$14.4 billion.