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Urban county officials call for federal action on transportation funding

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Association of Counties’ Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC) today urged action on key federal transportation legislation and funding. As major stakeholders in the nation’s transportation system, counties stand to lose billions of dollars and sustain countless setbacks unless Congress acts.

LUCC is a bipartisan coalition of 1,000 county officials from the nation’s most populous metropolitan counties.

During a briefing at the National Press Club, LUCC members called for the swift reauthorization of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) and a long-term solution for the Highway Trust Fund, which is fast approaching a major fiscal cliff.

“Counties call on Congress to fix the Highway Trust Fund and reauthorize a six-year surface transportation bill that directs more funding to locally-owned infrastructure,” said Tarrant County, Texas Commissioner Roy C. Brooks, LUCC’s chair. “Federal inaction leaves urban counties stuck in traffic. Counties are doing our part, and we need Congress to step up and take action now.”

Counties play a critical role in the nation’s transportation system. They own and maintain the greatest share of the nation’s road miles, or 45 percent (compared to the 32 percent of public roads owned by cities and townships; 19 percent by states; and 3 percent by the federal government) and more than 230,000 bridges, or 39 percent. Counties are also stewards of more than a third of the nation’s transit systems and airports.

“Many urban county leaders know too well the costs of crumbling infrastructure,” Brooks said. “Structurally-deficient bridges and crumbling roads not only represent a serious danger to public safety, but they also hinder our economic development and increase traffic in heavily-congested urban areas.”

If Congress fails to act, MAP-21 will expire at the end of September; the Highway Trust Fund will hit a major fiscal cliff by August, resulting in a loss of nearly $10.5
billion in direct funding for urban areas alone. The uncertainty around these federal transportation solutions can be crippling for counties’ long-term planning and progress on critical capital improvement projects. The loss or reduction of the federal investment in county- or municipal-owned highways and bridges would be a devastating blow, forcing postponement or cancellation of much-needed work.

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The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo assists America’s 3,069 counties in pursuing excellence in public service to produce healthy, vibrant, safe and resilient counties. NACo promotes sound public policies, fosters county solutions and innovation, promotes intergovernmental and public-private collaboration and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. More information at: www.naco.org.