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Calls For Congress To Increase Level Of Funding For Highway & Mass Transit Projects To Spur Economy, Improve Quality of Life;

\$12 Million Would Be Designated To Relieve Route 17 Congestion

Washington, DC - Congressman Steve Rothman (D-Fair Lawn) today blasted the White House for threatening to veto a massive transportation, job creation bill that would send \$8.8 billion to New Jersey for highway and mass transit initiatives, including an allocation of \$12 million to relieve traffic congestion on Route 17. Rothman said passage of the Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (TEA-LU) would result in the creation of hundreds of thousands of jobs in New Jersey, pay for construction projects that would greatly improve the state's transportation network, spur overall economic growth in the state, and improve the quality of life for millions of New Jerseyans.

"Enacting TEA-LU will provide a significant boost to New Jersey's economy with hundreds of thousands of new construction jobs and a significantly enhanced transportation network that would help reduce gridlock and improve the quality of life for residents," Rothman said. "It is plain wrong that the Bush Administration is threatening to veto this measure unless the funding level is reduced. We need to raise the funding level, not reduce it. It is time for the Bush Administration and the Republicans in Congress to stop the talk of extending the tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires and use those critical dollars to pay for road and mass transit projects. Every \$1 billion invested in transportation infrastructure yields 47,500 jobs. We need to put people back to work in America and at the same time fix our nation's aging transportation infrastructure. I believe one of the best ways to do both important objectives is to pass a robust, long-term highway and mass transit bill."

The House today passed a \$275 billion TEA-LU package, which authorizes road and rail projects across the country for the next six years. Rothman voted for the measure while advocating that the final funding level be raised to at least the \$318 billion level that the Senate recently approved. The White House has proposed spending only \$256 billion and has threatened to veto any bill with a greater level of funding.

Most of the money from TEA-LU gets sent to the states, where the funds are later allocated for specific projects. Certain

high priority transportation initiatives, however, are specifically listed in the bill. Even though he believes the overall spending level in the bill should be higher, Rothman was able to secure \$19 million in the House version for high priority projects in his district. These projects include: \$12 million for Route 17 traffic congestion relief, \$2 million to help relieve flooding at the intersection of Route 46 and Main Street in Lodi, \$1.5 million to improve the flow of traffic at the Route 46 roadway circle in Little Ferry, \$2.5 million for biking, jogging, and fitness trails along Riverbank Park in Kearny, and \$1 million for the replacement and reconstruction of the Route 7 Wittpenn Bridge over the Hackensack River in Jersey City and Kearny.

"It is imperative that President Bush sign this bill so that New Jersey, especially the northern part of our state, will have an infusion of federal money that will help relieve traffic congestion at key points such as Route 17," Rothman said. "Investing in our transportation infrastructure is a very effective way to create jobs, while ensuring the smooth flow of commerce for thousands of businesses in and around New Jersey. And after we spend the money we have something tangible to show for it."

TEA-LU next heads to a conference committee where House and Senate transportation leaders will resolve differences between the two bills, including funding levels. Once the conference committee reaches an agreement, the measure will return to the House and Senate for a final vote on the reconciled bill.

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[Go back](#)