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## **Groups List New Jersey Transportation Funding Priorities**

The Transportation Trust Fund, which covers the costs of maintenance, repair, and expansion for New Jersey's road, bridge and transit infrastructure will run out of money July 1, 2015. For years, many groups have highlighted the impact of an insolvent transportation fund and the burden of debt on the economy of the state.

In advance of Governor Christie's budget address on Tuesday, February 24, groups have come together to call on the governor and the state legislature to find a new, sustainable and long-term revenue source dedicated to the Transportation Trust Fund. This revenue source should be adequate to support a more robust capital program than has been enacted over the past 10 years, a figure estimated by many to be closer to \$3 billion annually; a current proposal would raise \$2 billion annually. Currently, spending levels hover at \$1.6 billion a year.

While this dire situation has drawn massive attention by policy makers, advocacy organizations, trade unions and other groups spanning the entire spectrum of interests in the state, most of the dialog has been around funding sources and not funding priorities. "Restoring solvency to the Transportation Trust Fund will address only half of the problem; how the state spends these funds is the other half," said Veronica Vanterpool, Executive Director of Tri-State Transportation Campaign. "Reducing the backlog of deficient bridges, improving pavement conditions on roadways, and investing in bus, rail, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure must be funding priorities for a replenished and revamped TTF."

With the governor and the legislature expected to adopt a final funding solution to identify increased funding for the Transportation Trust Fund in the coming weeks, it is imperative that those funds be used to address New Jersey's most pressing transportation needs.

Funding priorities identified by the groups:

- Focus on "fix-it-first"
- Transit expansion projects, especially cross-Hudson
- Identify dedicated funding stream for NJTransit's operating needs
- Investment in freight rail
- Increase investment in projects that support bicycling and walking

"We can't keep building new roads in New Jersey without repairing the ones that are crumbling," said Doug O'Malley, Director of Environment New Jersey. "Our trains and buses are bursting at the seams with passengers -- we can't shortchange riders by continuing to raid NJ Transit's capital funding year after year."

New Jersey must also include robust investments in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. "Such investments lead to safer roads and boost economic vitality for a community," said Cyndi Steiner, Executive Director of New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition. "These modes provide greater connectivity - "first mile/last mile" solutions - for already congested downtowns and transit hubs. The ability to easily access mass transit increases ridership, contributes to reduced road congestion, and drives economic expansion in communities."

Transportation is the backbone of the economy. Any solution to address the insolvency of the TTF must be accompanied with a detailed plan that demonstrates responsible spending. "We need to make sure we can trust the governor and legislature to spend the money on the right projects in the right areas," said Jeff Tittel, Director of The New Jersey Sierra Club. "This will not only add jobs and grow our economy, but it will help to reduce air pollution. We can turn our transportation system from a lose-lose to a win-win. People of New Jersey are stuck in traffic longer on roads and bridges that are falling apart. We have to fix this now to get New Jersey moving again."