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New *NC Go!* Leaders Announce 2007 Agenda *Transportation Funding Solutions Critical for Legislature*

Raleigh, NC – As the 2007 legislative session gets underway, transportation coalition *NC Go!* announced its priorities for the year as well as new volunteer leadership for the organization. Once again the coalition is challenging elected officials to begin serious debate on the transportation funding shortfall that looms in our state.

“We are at a crossroads and inaction is not an option,” said William “Beau” Mills, recently appointed as chair for *NC Go!* “North Carolina faces a \$65 billion shortfall between projected needs and available funding during the next 25 years. There are immediate needs which must be addressed, and elected officials need to take a look at the investments we making in transportation in North Carolina. It’s obvious something’s broken.”

NC Go! is the state’s only broad-based coalition focused on strengthening North Carolina’s transportation infrastructure. The group represents more than 130 businesses and organizations, including chambers of commerce and transit authorities. According to *NC Go!*, without adequate investment in highways, bridges, transit and other multi-modal forms of transportation, safety and efficiency decrease with overuse which results in deterioration and congestion.

As part of the *NC Go!* plan for 2007, highlighted priorities include:

- Authorize a \$1 billion bond to jump-start transportation projects.
- Preserve existing funding for transportation needs and end diversion from the Highway Trust Fund.
- Permit local option solutions – including tolling – to enable municipalities to meet special needs.
- Increase the Highway Use Fee to 5 percent, similar to neighboring states.
- Seek fundamental financing reform for transportation funding.

“We are calling on legislators in Raleigh to address the growing transportation problem in our state,” added Mills. “If left unchecked, traffic only gets worse and highways and bridges in need of repair become ones that need to be replaced. This is the year to act.”

Mills has volunteered for several years as part of the *NC Go!* Executive Committee and, since 2001, has served as the Director for the N.C. Metropolitan Coalition. Previously he was a federal employee on special assignment as a Senior Policy Adviser to N.C. Governor Jim Hunt. Mills was also an Eisenhower Fellow in 2006, when he traveled to China to study their rapidly developing infrastructure and economic development strategies in an effort to increase North Carolina’s competitiveness in the region.

The coalition also announced that Berry Jenkins was appointed as *NC Go!* vice chair. Jenkins, director of the Carolinas AGC Highway Heavy Equipment Division, is a founding volunteer and executive committee member of *NC Go!*

“We pay a heavy price for investing too little in transportation,” said Jenkins. “Without adequate maintenance and improvement, safety issues and congestion worsen. That’s bad for economic development, commerce and our quality of life.”

“This is about more than completing loops or building bypasses,” said Jenkins. “*NC Go!* is making recommendations and calling for solutions because there are potholes, road signs and barricades going unrepaired. You might not recognize how important these repairs are until there’s not enough money for them.”

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