



For Immediate Release  
August 27, 2007

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## **Public Deserves Special Session on Transportation** *Governor, legislators have opportunity to address overlooked needs*

**Raleigh, N.C.** – Even though legislators concluded their session weeks ago, unfinished business remains in the Capital, according to transportation advocacy organization *NC Go!* Although the legislature passed a record budget, highways, bridges and all aspects of the transportation system were shortchanged. To remedy the situation, *NC Go!* is urging the governor and lawmakers to convene a special session on transportation and find meaningful funding solutions for both short- and long-term needs.

“Drivers and businesses in our state got a raw deal,” said Beau Mills, chair of *NC Go!* “The state’s transportation system received no increase in funding, despite a growing population, more drivers, increased system use and a steep rate of inflation for highway construction costs. A critical part of our infrastructure was just ignored.”

North Carolina’s transportation system is facing a financial meltdown. Over the next 25 years, unmet needs are projected to exceed available funding by \$65 billion. Vital repair and maintenance projects face cutbacks and critical projects like urban loops face long or indefinite delays. Also, public transportation and transit systems will be unable to meet the demands of increased use. The solution, according to Mills, is immediate action by lawmakers to address transportation needs in a special session.

“The time has come for some bridge building at the General Assembly,” said Mills. “A special session on transportation should convene, but there needs to be a spirit of cooperation and a focus on moving this state ahead. There needs to be a commitment to finding solutions and taking action. The public won’t stand for another study group or panel that yields no action or outcomes.”

*NC Go!* pushed lawmakers this year to adopt funding measures that could help address the shortage of revenue for transportation needs in the state. The group’s main recommendation, an increase in the highway use fee to 5 percent, would have yielded more than \$400 million. Also, *NC Go!* called for the state to stop transferring money out of the Highway Trust Fund into the General Fund.

At the legislative session’s end, transportation funding hit a roadblock. Despite a surplus of money not appropriated in the record-high General Fund budget, legislators chose to continue the annual transfer out of the Highway Trust Fund – revenue raised from transportation sources like the gas tax – to the tune of \$170 million.

“North Carolina businesses, families and tourism depend on a safe and efficient transportation system,” said Mills. “People and goods need to be able to move freely and with confidence, without congestion or unsafe highways and bridges. And public transportation systems should be adequately funded, to help provide transportation alternatives.”

“We have given any potential study group or commission a head start,” said Mills. “The needs and the solutions are not new – those have been on the table. What we need now is action and leadership.”

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