



For Immediate Release
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Statement of Berry Jenkins, NC Go! Vice Chair on

Raleigh, N.C. – Today the 21st Century Transportation Committee wrapped up its initial round of work and submitted its recommendations to the General Assembly. The interim recommendations provide a framework of ideas for the legislature to act upon during the short session.

The 21st Century Transportation Committee under chair Brad Wilson has made remarkable progress since its appointment last fall. From their many meetings across the state to submitting these recommendations, the committee has been accessible to the public and stuck to a timeline to deliver results. Most importantly, they have provided solutions that save legislators time in formulating their own recommendations during this short session and adhered to the call for no programs requiring new taxes.

The General Assembly must move quickly to act upon as many components of the recommendations as possible. For the sake of North Carolinians' quality of life and to preserve our economic strength, we have to address the transportation funding crisis we are facing, deal with urban congestion and improve mobility. The public and businesses around the state expect legislators to deal with transportation infrastructure – one of our most pressing issues.

Among the recommendations submitted by the 21st Century Transportation Committee, *NC Go!* applauds and urges action on the following components:

Eliminate the transfer from the Highway Trust Fund to the General Fund. The time has come to use all transportation revenue for transportation purposes. By eliminating the \$172 million transfer, gap funding could be provided to the NC Turnpike Authority to help more quickly and cheaply complete vital projects, and a statewide transportation bond could be financed.

Establish an Intermodal and Congestion Relief Fund. This funding would provide grants to local governments to match local funds designed for public transportation and congestion relief.

Provide grants for rail and ports. To assist economic development, increase passenger rail capacity and improve and enhance intermodal capabilities, funding should be provided to shortline railroads, railroads throughout the state and the NC State Ports Authority. Expanding and enhancing our ability to move freight and passengers by rail will strengthen our economy, allow increased trade and ease truck and vehicle traffic on our highways.

Allow local option financing in several regions around the state. The success of Charlotte's ½ cent sales tax for transit has been affirmed repeatedly – twice by voters in Mecklenburg County and by the large volumes of transit users in the area. The time has come to provide legislative authority for similar projects in the Triad, Triangle or any counties facing urban growth and congestion.

End North Carolina's status as a donor state on Federal highway revenues. North Carolina only receives back about 89 percent of the money it contributes to the federal highway trust fund. Given our

growing needs and transportation funding shortfall, our state should receive a 100 percent return on our contribution. Congress should take action to correct this situation.

Extend the State Ports Tax Credit. The credit, set to expire in 2009, encourages importers and exporters to utilize our state-owned port terminals. With international shipping to the U.S. projected to double in the next few years, North Carolina ports should be viewed as the most competitive location for businesses.

While these do not comprise all of the committee's recommendations, these represent some of the positive solutions placed before the General Assembly. *NC Go!* hopes the legislature takes advantage of the work done for them by the committee and quickly takes measures to address our transportation funding shortfall.

North Carolina should not only return to being known as the *Good Roads State*, but should be regarded as the *Good Transportation State*. Thanks to the work of the 21st Century Transportation Committee, we have moved one step closer. We urge the legislature to begin their work today.

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About NC Go!

NC Go! is the state's only broad-based coalition advocating for North Carolina's transportation system. Our coalition consists of nearly 100 businesses, chambers of commerce, associations and transit agencies representing 25,000 businesses and member organizations, with more than 6 million employees, transit riders, citizens and drivers in North Carolina. *NC Go!* has led the call to adequately invest in highways, bridges, public transportation, rails, ports, airports and ferries. For more information, visit www.ncgo.org.