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**NC Go! Crowds the Halls of the General Assembly**

***Message to Leaders: “Don’t use Transportation Fund as your overdraft protection”***

RALEIGH – In a scene that was reminiscent of rush hour on I-40, more than 200 transportation advocates today clogged the halls of the General Assembly to make the case for transportation funding as part of *NC Go!*’s second annual Transportation Day at the legislature.

“As stakeholders in the transportation system, we’re here to talk about issues of great concern,” said Ricky Ward, Chair of *NC Go!*. “It seems that some elected leaders are treating our transportation funds as the state’s overdraft protection.”

For the new fiscal year, which begins July 1, Gov. Easley has proposed taking nearly \$400 million from transportation funds to pay for other programs.

Since the Trust Fund was enacted in 1989, \$170 million annually has been transferred for other purposes – totaling more than \$2 billion in transfers. Earlier this year, Easley used emergency authority to transfer an additional \$80 million from the Fund to address current year budget shortfalls. The governor’s proposal increases the annual transfer to \$250 million.

“Legislative findings have already shown that North Carolina’s road system is becoming increasingly congested and overburdened with traffic,” Ward added. “Taking nearly \$400 million from transportation projects is not a sensible option to the budget dilemma. And NO current budget shortfall justifies proposing a permanent annual transfer of \$250 million.”

The latest Senate budget proposal takes \$80 million for two years and an additional \$125 million, which is to be paid back to the Trust Fund over five years.

*NC Go!* is urging state leaders to keep an element of “trust” in the Trust Fund, as these monies are collected from gas taxes and motor vehicle fees and are dedicated to address transportation and infrastructure needs.

In addition to Ward, Transportation Day speakers included Representative Nelson Cole, Ron Tober, Executive Director of Charlotte Area Transit System, .

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Following the kick-off and legislative visits, transportation advocates had an opportunity to talk in more detail about transportation issues during *NC Go!*'s "BBQ and You" luncheon on the lawn of Halifax Street Mall.

The invitation – a plunger with one simple message: "In case of back-up, use plunger."

*NC Go!* was launched in 2001 with less than 10 members. Today, the coalition has more than 80 members representing over 22,000 businesses and organizations and 1 million individuals across the state.

Members include North Carolina Citizens for Business and Industry (NCCBI), AAA Carolinas, Cisco Systems, Wachovia, the Research Triangle Foundation, NC Farm Bureau Federation, Triangle Transit Authority (TTA), NC Public Transportation Association (NCPTA), NC Truckers Association, Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS), 12 chambers of commerce, construction industry associations and private engineering companies.

*NC Go!* released their legislative agenda in May of 2002. This agenda included:

- **Protecting Dedicated Trust Fund Money**  
*NC Go!* has adamantly opposed using Trust Fund money for non-transportation related programs.
- **Expanding Highway Trust Fund Flexibility**  
*NC Go!* supports changes to the Trust Fund that expand flexibility, broaden project eligibility requirements and provide additional funding. With an allocation system well over a decade old, 80 percent of these funds can be spent on only 20 percent of our transportation needs.
- **Maintaining Efficient Cash Management Practices**  
*NC Go!* opposes efforts to reduce the funds committed in the 2001 Cash Management Bill, which directed \$680 million towards critical transportation projects around the state and set up more efficient methods for management of Trust Fund cash balances.
- **Terminating Annual Transfers from the Highway Trust Fund to the General Fund**  
*NC Go!* strongly supports and encourages a *phased-in* approach which terminates annual transfers from the Highway Trust Fund to the General Fund for non-transportation related projects.
- **Increasing Multi-Modal Transportation Funding**  
*NC Go!* believes that increases in transportation funding should have a multi-modal focus. A sound multi-modal transportation infrastructure is vital to economic competitiveness, job creation and overall quality of life for North Carolina and its citizens.

For additional information about *NC Go!*, its poll, or how to become a member, please call (919) 882-1967 or send an e-mail to [ncgo@capstrat.com](mailto:ncgo@capstrat.com).