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Invest in North Carolina's Transportation Infrastructure *Coalition Announces 2009 Legislative Agenda*

Raleigh, N.C. – It's never been more important to spend revenue raised from transportation sources – like the gas tax and highway use fees – on much needed transportation projects in North Carolina, according to transportation advocacy group *NC Go!* The organization released its 2009 legislative agenda this week, focusing on the Highway Trust Fund transfer, local option financing and a robust transportation bond.

NC Go!'s top three legislative priorities for 2009 include:

- Continue to phase out the transfer from the Highway Trust Fund to the General Fund over a three-year period.
- Allow the people to vote on local option financing for transit. 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.
- Authorize a robust transportation bond to address critical bridge, traffic congestion and public transportation needs throughout the state.

"*NC Go!*'s legislative priorities will not only help improve safety and efficiency on our roads and bridges but will also help generate new jobs and encourage economic development during this downturn in the economy," said Marc Finlayson, *NC Go!* co-chair.

North Carolina is projected to see its population grow by 50 percent between 2000 and 2030. At the same time, as more drivers hit the roads, all of us are driving more miles and causing more road wear and tear. And since 2002, construction costs have risen more than 100 percent. To address traffic congestion and safety, spending must increase.

"This year the Assembly will consider fair and sustainable transportation funding sources for the next century, as well as address public transportation needs, bridge maintenance and many other important projects both rural and urban." said Finlayson. "But, we can meet immediate needs with money restored to the Highway Trust Fund, local option financing and a transportation bond."

Investment in transportation projects is not only important for economic development and quality of life but also in terms of job creation. For every \$1 billion investment, approximately 35,000 jobs are created and \$5.7 billion in additional economic activity.

"Investing in our transportation system – roads, transit and all components – can help create jobs here in North Carolina," said Finlayson. "We are all eager for the federal stimulus package, but we shouldn't begin to think this solves all our problems."

Beyond the top priorities for *NC Go!* the coalition has additional long-term transportation goals as part of its legislative agenda. In ongoing efforts to support transportation, *NC Go!* calls for reforming the transportation funding system, tolling major interstates throughout North Carolina and improving the state's return on federal highway revenues.

"*NC Go!* is committed to equity and fairness in decision making and funding," said Finlayson. "As communities, we should each be able to determine how we address local transportation funding needs. Our transportation revenue should go to transportation projects. And we should all be willing to pay our fair share for the miles we drive."

"We look forward to working with lawmakers as they tackle the difficult transportation challenges that lie ahead."

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 about *NC Go!* and our legislative goals, please visit www.ncgo.org.**

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