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***NC Go!* CALLS FOR ACTION IN ADDRESSING URGENT TRANSPORTATION NEEDS**

Transportation advocates join in debate on funding solutions

RALEIGH, NC – North Carolina is headed for a perfect storm in terms of the gap between available funding and projected transportation needs, according to the statewide advocacy organization *NC Go!* The group hosted its annual meeting Wednesday evening bringing legislators, businesses, associations and concerned residents together from around the state to discuss solutions and spur action.

“The time has come for action and not just words,” said Bill Carstarphen, *NC Go!* Chair. “North Carolina’s population is growing and the miles we drive are increasing even faster. The current system for paying for new projects, improvements and even maintenance is inadequate. We urge our elected officials to begin realistically addressing these needs.”

The NC Department of Transportation recently revised its estimate of projected needs and funding through the year 2030. According to NCDOT, the state is now facing a \$65 billion shortfall in funding transportation improvements.

NC Go! called on advocates and legislators to approach with an open mind the search for funding options, but urged quick action. Some of the organization’s suggestions include:

- **Pass a \$1 Billion Bond** - Jumpstart transportation and transit improvements and repair through legislative authority for a bond. Any infrastructure bond NC takes on must include funding for roads, bridges and transit.
- **End diversion from the Highway Trust Fund** – The annual amount diverted would not begin to cover needs, but continued diversion erodes public confidence in transportation funding.
- **Protect the gas tax** – The state’s motor fuels tax is not the culprit behind fluctuating gas prices. Nobody calls for increasing the tax when prices drop. The truth is the gas tax is our most reliable source of funding and it must be preserved.
- **Allow local option solutions** – Localities should have the option to raise funds to meet their local needs, whether through local sales tax or tolling in their area. *NC Go!* calls on these localities to use the funds specifically to address transportation needs.
- **Permit tolling of urban loops** – Given the present funding crisis, many vital urban loops will either be long-delayed in their completion or be indefinitely postponed. Tolling of urban loops should be considered as a means of speeding the completion of these roadways. Resulting revenue should be devoted exclusively to transportation and should remain in the tolling jurisdiction.

- **Align North Carolina’s user fees with those of surrounding states** – Simply raising our highway user fees to comparable rates in neighboring states could generate \$1 billion in additional funding.

According to *NC Go!*, there is no simple solution to the problem. To begin to meet the \$65 billion shortfall all existing funding sources, including the gas tax and user fees, would have to be doubled. Every year we fail to address the problem puts increased strain on highways, bridges, transit and other transportation systems.

“As North Carolinians consider our transportation future, we should ask the following questions,” said Carstarphen. “What will be the cost of unsafe highways, deteriorating bridges, potholes and inadequate modernization and congestion? How much family and business opportunity is lost daily waiting in traffic jams and congestion? Will employment and economic investment occur in a state where the movement of employees, materials and products is slowed to a dead stop each morning and evening? Look around our urban areas. Currently we are not even able to keep expressway lights burning.”

“If we want a positive transportation future with multimodal options and if we want to embrace the economic growth that is going to happen in our state, we need to wake-up and get moving,” said Carstarphen. “The time has come to end partisan debates, come up with meaningful solutions and implement them. *NC Go!* will stand with the leaders who put transportation first in our state.”

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