



For Immediate Release
Aug. 27, 2009

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North Carolina on the Path to Become the *Good Transportation State*
Transit funding one more tool to cover shortfall, address growth

Raleigh, N.C. – Today’s signing of HB 148 into law by Governor Beverly Perdue marks the next step in a new era of financing transportation in our state, according to transportation coalition *NC Go!* The Congestion Relief/Intermodal Fund (HB 148) will allow communities to address their public transportation needs with local solutions and opens the doors to improved mobility, environmental protections and economic development.

“Two options are now available that a few years ago seemed unlikely,” said Berry Jenkins, *NC Go!* co-chair. “A local option sales tax for transit and tolling on certain major highway projects will both help us better prepare for future population growth and the increase capacity throughout the transportation system.”

“We think of it like two legs of a three-legged stool,” said Jenkins. “Now we need to consider the third leg – a long-term, equitable and user-pays system such as miles of road used.”

HB 148 grants all counties throughout the state the same option already given to Mecklenburg County – the right to hold a referendum on a local option sales tax dedicated to transit. In Triangle and Triad counties, citizens will be allowed to vote on a ½ cent sales tax for transit. In the remaining counties (excluding Mecklenburg), the option will be for ¼ cent per dollar.

“We commend Governor Perdue for signing this bill into law,” said Jenkins. “This isn’t a tax, but the freedom for communities and citizens who consider public transportation a priority to hold a vote. If a community is not ready, voters won’t approve. But they should have that option.”

Public transportation has many benefits which are being enjoyed by growing communities around the nation. By moving drivers off the road and onto transit – buses, vans and rail – traffic congestion is eased and additional capacity is available for businesses to move goods and services, as well as employees.

“Walkable, transit-friendly communities improve citizens’ quality of life and have positive results,” said Amber Wagner, a member of the *NC Go!* executive committee and executive director for the North Carolina Public Transportation Association. “Public transportation helps reduce pollution and auto emissions. It encourages citizens to walk or bike to transit stops, resulting in increased physical activity – a critical component of fighting obesity. And, with the right planning, it fosters dense growth around transit sites and brings economic development.”

“Public transportation isn’t just an urban issue,” said Wagner. “Public transportation services are critical to many citizens in smaller communities and rural areas. For the elderly, disabled and people without a vehicle or who choose not to drive, it provides access to medical care, groceries and social contact within their community.”

NC Go! commends the work of legislative champions and the coalition’s partners in making HB 148 a reality. A diverse coalition of more than 50 organizations from around the state came together to support the bill and included environmental advocates, business advocates, social

justice organizations, road builders, transit operators and city and county officials. Those supporters can be viewed by visiting www.ncgo.org.

“Allowing communities to vote on transit funding is one more tool we have at our disposal,” said Jenkins. “Along with toll projects we can help fill the financial void between existing revenue sources – like the gas tax – and growing needs.”

“If we want to become the *Good Transportation State* and not just strive to return to the *Good Roads State* we have to be creative,” said Jenkins. “Our leaders will have to identify funding streams that align with users’ true consumption of the transportation system. The gas tax has been a good approximation but it has shortcomings. People criticize vehicle miles traveled, but it is the most accurate way to gauge the roads and bridges we use.”

“Thanks to the transit bill becoming law, communities can better plan for the future and determine the best way, locally, to help meet growing transportation needs,” said Jenkins. “Elected leaders must now move forward in finding a sustainable funding system overall for transportation.”

About NC Go!

NC Go! is the state’s only broad-based coalition advocating for North Carolina’s transportation system. Our coalition consists of more than 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.

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