

PRESS RELEASE

The Honorable Jim Himes

Connecticut's 4th District

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Himes, Norwalk Officials and Labor Leaders Press for Long-Term Bridge, Road Funding

Investment will create jobs, improve safety, efficiency

NORWALK, CT—Congressman Jim Himes (CT-4) today visited Norwalk's deteriorated Yankee Doodle Bridge to highlight the urgent need for long-term federal transportation investments to create jobs and improve the safety and efficiency of Connecticut's transit and highway networks. Many of Connecticut's bridges are in dire need of repair: of the state's 4,218 bridges, 1,472 are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. Unless Congress acts, the Highway Trust Fund, which reimburses states for highway and transit projects, will go bankrupt later this summer. That could mean significant delays for planned repairs on the Yankee Doodle Bridge and thousands of other road and transit projects nationwide – and cost the U.S. economy up to 700,000 construction jobs in the next year.

“The Highway Trust Fund is absolutely vital to Southwest Connecticut's economy and safety, and keeping it solvent is a basic responsibility. But we can no longer afford short-term fixes that inevitably cause more uncertainty and push us from crisis to crisis,” **Himes said.** “Our nation's transportation infrastructure is the bedrock on which we build economic growth and create jobs. We need a long-term transportation bill that invests in our crumbling bridges, roads and railways to ensure the safety of our people and make our economy more competitive.”

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a \$10.8 billion measure last week to temporarily replenish the Highway Trust Fund through May 2015, and a similar bill awaits action in the Senate. Himes supported the short-term fix because it would avert an immediate crisis that could jeopardize 9,612 jobs in Connecticut and delay 1,630 active highway and transit projects across the state. In Norwalk today, Himes urged Republicans to work with Democrats on a multi-year, reliable funding stream for the nation's transportation programs.

Himes was joined by Norwalk Mayor Harry Rilling; Don Shubert, President of the Connecticut Construction Industries Association; Lori Pelletier, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Connecticut AFL-CIO; State Sen. Bob Duff of Norwalk; State Rep. Chris Perone of Norwalk; and Glenn Marshall, President of Carpenters Union Local No. 210.

“Last week, the U.S. House voted to throw a life preserver to the Highway Trust Fund, but that will only keep it afloat temporarily. Without a long-term solution, the construction industry is heading into another year of uncertainty in 2015,” **said Don Shubert, President of the Connecticut Construction**

Industries Association. “Congressman Himes is right – Congress needs to stay focused on a permanent fix for the Highway Trust Fund and keep the momentum going until the job is done. Patches and temporary measures are not going to do it. A long-term revenue solution for the Highway Trust Fund needs to be found by this Congress this year. Too many jobs and bridges are at stake for Congress to walk away now.”

Lori Pelletier, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, said, “Infrastructure investment is a key component to economic success. Without investment in our transportation system how can we expect businesses to expand? I commend Congressman Himes for pushing Congress to develop a long-term, sustainable transportation program.

The economic case for transportation investment is clear. In the long term, transportation improvements generate economic development locally, regionally, and nationwide. The Federal Highway Administration (FHA) has estimated that for every \$1 billion invested in federal highway and bridge construction, almost 30,000 jobs are created.

The impact of an overburdened, deteriorating transportation system is enormous. The condition of the nation's transportation infrastructure jeopardizes safety, quality of life, economic growth, and the environment. Almost one-tenth of the nation's 607,380 bridges, including the heavily-traveled Yankee Doodle Bridge over the Norwalk River, are rated structurally deficient by the FHA. According to the FHA's 2013 bridge inventory, the Yankee Doodle is the most structurally deficient bridge in Connecticut and the 147th most deficient bridge in the country.

Connecticut's roads are sapping money from household budgets and precious time away from families and work. Forty-one percent of Connecticut's public roads are in poor condition. The state's drivers lose \$1.6 billion each year driving on roads that are congested, deteriorated and unsafe, according to a report released in May by TRIP, a national transportation group. Nationwide, traffic congestion costs American motorists \$121 billion a year in wasted time and fuel costs.

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Congressman Jim Himes represents Connecticut's 4th District, which includes the communities of Bridgeport, Darien, Easton, Fairfield, Greenwich, Monroe, New Canaan, Norwalk, Oxford, Redding, Ridgefield, Shelton, Stamford, Trumbull, Weston, Westport, and Wilton.