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Building and Construction Trades Department

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July 15, 2009

The Honorable Barbara Boxer, Chair
Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Boxer:

On behalf of the 13 national and international unions who collectively comprise the Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO, I write to you today to express our concern over the committee's planned action to issue an 18-month extension of the current highway and transit programs contained under SAFETEA-LU. From the perspective of the construction industry that is experiencing unemployment rates in excess of 20% and 25% in some individual states, this action would exacerbate an already troubling situation and effectively delay consideration of this bill until the next Congress. Beyond the obvious need to modernize our crumbling infrastructure, the federal highway and transit re-authorization represents a viable and effective remedy to immediately address the systemic problems associated with a depressed economy and escalating unemployment and should be considered one of the most effective additional economic stimulating measures before this Congress.

The current unemployment rate is much worse than most had predicted or anticipated and consequently, additional corrective measures are required. We look forward to continued work with members of the committee as well as joining efforts in the House to successfully reauthorize this vital legislation in a timely manner that will address many of our economic difficulties head on and will not sacrifice long overdue investments in our nation's infrastructure. The federal highway and transit re-authorization offers Congress an opportunity to focus on, debate and act on these challenges. Therefore, America's Building Trades Unions opposes the proposed eighteen month extension, and respectfully encourages the Committee to initiate the process of re-authorizing this critical program during this Congress.

With kind regards, I am,

Sincerely,

Mark H. Ayers
President

cc: Environment and Public Works Majority Committee Members