In the final hours before the US Congress left for its scheduled August recess, temporary solutions were enacted to keep the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) Highway Account from going bankrupt over the recess.

Although this short-term infusion of resources is vital, it does nothing to address what happens after September 30 when the current highway authorization SAFETEA-LU expires.

In response to estimates that the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) Highway Account will reach a zero balance sometime in August, both the House and Senate passed a measure to transfer $7 billion from the General Fund to the HTF Highway Account. The funds are intended to ensure federal highway commitments can be fulfilled through September 30.

The Obama Administration has been actively pushing for an 18-month extension of SAFETEA-LU.

Members of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee, including Senator Sander Levin (D-MI), sent a letter to the Committee Chair calling for expedient action on a transportation funding bill. The letter stated, “This bill represents a bipartisan opportunity to improve transportation infrastructure, increase productivity, and create jobs throughout our economy without adding to our national debt.”

Unfortunately, the hopes of avoiding an 18-month extension were dashed again as Rep. James Oberstar (D-MN), Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, told the House Ways and Means Committee that he does not favor raising the gas tax to pay for the $500 billion transportation authorization ($450 billion for highways and transit, $50 billion for high-speed rail) during the current recession, echoing the position of the White House.

Meanwhile the Senate committees have moved forward with plans to implement the proposed 18-month extension. Senate Bill 1474 was introduced by Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT) to replenish the HTF with a transfer of $26.8 billion from the General Fund. This transfer was to represent reimbursements for lost interest payments due to the Fund since 1998 and for past disaster emergency expenditures. This reimbursement and current gas tax collections are estimated to provide adequate funding for the surface transportation program through March 2011.

Although Senate Banking Committee Chairman Christopher Dodd (D-CT) and others have expressed hope for action on the HTF reauthorization in 2010, the pending election would make a federal fuel tax increase virtually impossible to secure. While the exact length of the extension may end up as a compromise, Capitol insiders agree there is little chance of a reauthorization this year.

“There are no free lunches when it comes to infrastructure investment. You get what you pay for.”

Tom Donahue
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Make Your Reservations for the Last RUSH-PAC Golf Outing of the Year:

Northern Golf Outing - Tuesday - September 8 - 9:00 a.m. shotgun start - Black Bear Golf Club in Vanderbilt - Hosted by Cheboygan

This is the last RUSH-PAC golf outing of the year! Registration has been mailed and is posted on CRAM’s Web site! This course is conveniently located only 16 miles east of Boyne Mountain, the location for the Northern Association’s Annual Meeting. If you have any questions, please call the CRAM office or e-mail sandy@localroads.net.

It was a beautiful day on the golf course for the Southern Mid-Michigan Golf Outing, Friday, July 31 at the Cascades Golf Course. Registration began at the Cascades Manor House, with everyone soon on the picturesque golf course with an 8:30 a.m. shotgun start!

Thank you to the 47+ sponsors and 78 golfers who participated in the outing. In this economy, this is a real tribute to our road friends. A special thank you goes to Ken Straub and Marilyn Kilpatrick, and their crew, who work hard to pull off this event. The revenues will go far to promote candidates who support the county road system in Michigan.

The winning team (Cody Lester, Dale Swetland Jr., Bo Cochrane and Dallas Cochrane) was generously sponsored by Lester Brothers Excavating.

“No duty is more urgent than that of returning thanks.”

~ St. Ambrose ~

JACKSON HOSTS ANOTHER OUTSTANDING CRAM RUSH-PAC GOLF OUTING
Road Funding Alternatives
Pay Now or Pay Later

AS MAINTENANCE NEEDS GO UNFUNDED, DRIVERS PAY

Roads like the one on the right wreak havoc on the vehicles that use it. The U.S. Department of Transportation found that road deterioration increases the cost of ownership, repair, fuel and tire costs. They also found that these deteriorated roads accelerate the depreciation of vehicles in proportion to the roughness of the surface.

At the same time, each passing vehicle increases the damages. The maintenance needs of Michigan’s county roads have been chronically underfunded. It is estimated that $2 BILLION worth of needed repairs on county roads go unfunded each year.

THE ROAD INFORMATION PROGRAM DETERMINED THAT
DRIVING ON CRUMBLING AND CONGESTED ROADS COSTS
MOTORISTS AN AVERAGE OF $383 PER YEAR IN
ADDITIONAL MAINTENANCE COSTS, WASTED FUEL AND
LOST PRODUCTIVITY—UP FROM JUST $107 IN 1993.

RETURN PAVED ROADS TO GRAVEL

Without adequate funding for maintenance and repairs, paved roads are deteriorating beyond affordable preservation fixes. For road commissions that lack the funds to maintain these hard surfaced roads, the cost of rebuilding them is even further out of reach.

The cost to return a road to gravel is a fraction of the cost to rebuild a hard surface road. Additionally, gravel roads are cheaper to maintain.

The trade off in the situation is that gravel roads offer lower capacity, lower speeds, rougher rides and increased nuisances to the property owners that border the road.

At least fifteen road commissions have already taken, or are considering, this drastic measure. As maintenance needs go unfunded, you can expect that number to rise.

IF PAVEMENTS CAN BE RESURFACED WHILE
STILL IN FAIR CONDITION, REPAIRS GENERALLY COST 1/4 THE COST OF REPAIRING
ROADS IN POOR CONDITION.
FEWER BRIDGES

As Michigan was settled, our forefathers did an excellent job of weaving together communities across the State with a network of roads and bridges. Michigan’s naturally wet environment and soils resulted in the need for many river and stream crossings. Bridges and culverts are expensive pieces of our State’s infrastructure. In addition to steep increases in the cost of materials used for construction and maintenance of the more than 5600 bridges on the county road system, greater environmental-related expenses make it harder to keep Michigan connected.

We can easily draw back the memory of the tragic collapse of I-35 in Minneapolis, and the news has been dotted with recent stories of bridges being closed due to structural deficiencies...the impact of this option is obvious.

Detours around closed bridges can often be many miles long, weight-restricted bridges delay or restrict not only commercial traffic but also emergency services and public transportation services.

Without increased funding, there is no other option but to close or limit lower-volume crossings in order to maintain higher-volume structures.

FEWER PLOWS

The idea of fewer plows clearing fewer roads with reduced frequency is not popular, but has already materialized, at least to some extent, in every county across the State.

Not only have the costs of people, materials and equipment for snow removal increased, more than 1,000 miles have been added to the county road system since the last time the fuel tax was increased in 1997—these new miles do not include the addition of lanes to existing roads.

The Winter of 2008-09 was so expensive that many counties, and MDOT, were forced to reduce maintenance activities and projects.

ACCORDING TO THE AMERICAN ROAD AND TRANSPORTATION BUILDERS ASSOCIATION, EACH $100 MILLION INVESTED IN TRANSPORTATION CREATES 4,750 JOBS AND RETURNS MORE THAN $600 MILLION IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY.

CALL 1.888.719.3087

TELL YOUR LEGISLATORS TO STEP UP AND INVEST IN MICHIGAN’S FUTURE...AND YOURS!
TELL THEM TO FUND MICHIGAN’S ROADS NOW!
The nation’s leading transportation construction industry economist says the Obama Administration’s proposal to delay congressional enactment of a new, six-year federal surface transportation program investment bill until March 2011 could “submarine the entire stimulus effort to use infrastructure investment to create new jobs.”

Those were the words of American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) Vice President for Economics and Research, William R. Buechner, Ph.D., at a July 27 media briefing held at ARTBA headquarters in the nation’s capital. Stimulus investments, he says, will be undercut without near-term action on the federal highway/transit bill. Buechner also said that inaction could have unintended consequences for the economy.

“We learned the hard way over the period 2001 through 2005 that uncertainty about long-term federal investment in state and local highway and transit programs, combined with a national recession and state budget problems, leads to an overall stagnated transportation construction market. Absent congressional action on a long-term surface transportation investment bill this year, the conditions are again lined up to kill job growth in the construction sector and related industries.” The current surface transportation program authorization, enacted in August 2005, expires October 1.

Buechner, a Harvard trained economist who served on the professional staff of the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress for more than two decades, says the June 2009 “Fiscal Survey of the States,” conducted by the National Governors Association and the National Association of State Budget Officers, documents the funding problems now facing state transportation departments nationwide. The survey found nearly half the states have already—or plan to—cut back on their own funding for transportation programs this year or next.

Fifteen states have cut funding this year—Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Arizona, Utah, California, Oregon and Washington.

Nineteen states report they plan to cut their own transportation program funding in 2010—Maine, Massachusetts, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Idaho, Utah, California, Washington and Arizona.

“The only bright spot in the transportation construction market this year is the additional federal funding made available to the states and local governments through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act,” Buechner says. “Unfortunately, due to state budget challenges, the stimulus funds are allowing some states to simply maintain their 2008 activity level. In other states, stimulus dollars are, at best, serving to make overall state transportation program cuts less severe.”

“Overall, midway through 2009, we’re seeing the national dollar value of transportation infrastructure construction put in place slightly behind the 2008 pace,” he added.

“The stimulus funds are saving a lot of jobs,” Buechner says. But to really boost new job creation in the near term, he says, will “require a strong signal soon to the states and private sector that the federal government is fully committed to a significant, sustained and multi-year investment in transportation improvements programs.”

“That is absolutely required to get states to begin putting the larger, multi-year construction projects out to bid that spur significant capital investments in materials and equipment and create new jobs,” he says. “Otherwise, we’re looking at a constricting or flat market in most states for the next several years.”

The House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee is proposing legislation that would authorize a $500 billion federal investment in roads, bridges, transit systems and high speed rail over the next six years.

The ARTBA economic team estimates that, compared to status quo road funding, the multi-year $337 billion highway and bridge investment called for in the House bill would generate almost 150,000 new American jobs during 2010, if the measure were enacted this year. About half those jobs would be in the construction industry or their supply chain. The other half would be created throughout the economy.

Over the six-year period that would be covered by the House bill, Buechner says almost 540,000 more jobs throughout the U.S. economy would be supported on average annually than would be possible with status quo funding.

(Continued on page 7)
At a recent meeting, a potential ally was uncovered. Your local postmaster can be a valuable partner with respect to your road commission’s public image. The secret to any successful venture is sharing information.

Now is a great time to meet with your local postmaster(s) and talk about some overlapping issues you face. Road commissions can improve these relationships by taking time to:

**Meet with your postmaster(s).** Let them know that their mission is important to you and that you recognize the role they play in your community. Ask them what their priorities are and seek out areas where you can cooperate.

**Invite your postmaster to be your partner.** Few agencies have more eyes on the road each day than the post office. Have you told them that you would appreciate their eyes in your service? Mail carriers are an excellent early warning system as they drive the same routes day-after-day. Give them tools and numbers to allow them to report items of concern back to you. Odds are that their issues are probably yours as well.

**Communicate your mailbox guidelines.** While the USPS does have standards related to the construction and placement of mailboxes, those guidelines are still subject to the rules governing the locality. How many times have you had a call indicating that “the Post Office said I could...”? Sharing these guidelines will help eliminate this issue.

Share construction schedules as far in advance as possible. In rural areas, construction detours can often mean days of interrupted mail service for those along the construction route. Advance notice can allow time for alternate arrangements.

**Provide maps to your postmaster that indicate seasonal roads...and explain what seasonal roads are.** Most likely we have each been faced with an angry resident who had not been aware of the fact that their road was seasonal. We are well versed at responding, but many postmasters may not be aware of the meaning of a seasonal road.

**Share your plow routes and routing priorities.** Postal guidelines require that roads be well-maintained and passable for year-round delivery or service may be withdrawn. Postmasters often take the heat for unplowed roads when their customers call and complain about undelivered mail. If we provide our postmaster(s) an understanding of how and why plowing decisions are made and carried out, they can better respond to those callers.

**Explain how snowplows operate...or even allow the postmaster to ride along, in order to demonstrate how and why snow ends up piled against mailboxes.** Roadside snowbanks impair the ability of the post office to deliver mail, but as we are aware they are unavoidable. Postal customers remain responsible for making certain that their mailboxes are accessible.

**Communicate mailbox replacement policies.** Many postmasters in Michigan had been informed that road commissions would replace—or even had to replace—damaged mailboxes. Communications have been sent to the district managers indicating that this may or may not be the case depending on the policy of the county in question. The USPS also has some alternate workarounds for damaged mailboxes that you may not be aware of.

**Participate in the upcoming “Shake Your Mailbox Day.”** CRAM and the USPS have teamed up to take Roscommon County Road Commission’s award-winning idea statewide. More information will be coming on this event, but for now mark October 24, 2009 on your calendar as the first statewide “ShakeYour Mailbox Day.”

All-in-all, the efficient delivery of mail is one more public service that is enabled by the mission of your road commission. Effective communication and information sharing can create a partnership that leads to improved levels of service by both parties.
The Isabella County Road Commission is seeking qualified applicants for the position of Finance Director. This is a full-time management position. Applicants should possess a degree in Accounting, Finance and or, Business or equivalency of related work experience with ten years or more. Previous work experience in the field of public road transportation is highly desired.

The Finance Director functions as the Chief Financial Officer of the Isabella County Road Commission and is responsible for all financial and accounting functions and supervises other staff within this arena. The Finance Director is also appointed as Clerk to the Board and is responsible for attendance at all Isabella County Road Commission Board meetings and maintaining minutes of these meetings.

The salary range for this position is $51,000 to $57,500 with the starting salary to be determined by qualifications and experience. Send a statement of interest, with a resume along with salary information to: Isabella County Road Commission; Attn: Finance and Human Resources; 2261 E. Remus Road; Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858.

Resumes will be accepted until 3:00 p.m. August 25, 2009. Candidates requiring confidentiality should so indicate. More information regarding this position is available at www.isbellaroads.com. The Isabella County Road Commission is an equal opportunity employer.

Applications are being accepted for a Civil Engineer/Foreman position at the Manistee County Road Commission. Responsibilities include surveying, planning, design, and inspection of road and bridge projects and involve preparation of plans, specifications, estimates, proposals, and contracts, winter road patrol and other related duties. Position requires B.S. Degree in Civil Engineering with a Professional engineer’s license. Benefit package. Qualified candidates should forward their resume and salary requirements to Manistee County Road Commission, 8946 Chippewa Hwy. Bear Lake, MI 49614, by September 1, 2009. Manistee County Road Commission is an equal opportunity employer.

STIMULUS JOBS IMPACT COULD BE BLUNTED BY HIGHWAY BILL DELAY (Cont.)

“If Congress is looking for a second stimulus, they need look no further than the highway/transit/high speed rail program authorization,” he said. “There is no other bill under development or consideration in the Congress that would stimulate anywhere near the same job growth.”

The best evidence for this is a 2003 study by Global Insight that calculated the economic effects of an increase in highway and transit investment. The study found that every $1 billion increase in highway and transit investment generated $2.2 billion of additional GDP as the demand for products and services worked through the economy, almost $1 billion of disposable income for households, and an increase in federal tax revenues of almost $770 million.

The Obama Administration has asked Congress to postpone action on the surface transportation authorization until at least March 2011 and simply maintain the current level of funding to the states. In response, last week the Senate Environment & Public Works Committee endorsed an 18-month extension of the current program.

“We have known for years that state and local transportation agencies need long-term funding certainty to plan and implement highway and bridge construction projects,” Buechner says. “That is why Congress moved from annual authorizations during the 1950s and 1960s to the current practice of enacting six-year authorizations.”

“Short-term authorizations are simply too disruptive,” he adds. “It is virtually impossible for a state or local transportation agency to develop an effective highway investment program without a long-term funding horizon.”

This article is by Jeff Solsby of ARTBA.

JOB OPENINGS

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<td>Paul Bunyan Council</td>
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<td>NMARC Annual Conference</td>
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<td>Great Lakes Council</td>
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The Public Relations-Education Committee is making preparations for the September 21 Public Relations Workshop entitled, *Your Message In Today’s Media*. CRAM appreciates the generous hospitality of the Roscommon County Road Commission.

Save The Date

The 2010 NACE Annual Conference will be held April 25-29 in Fort Worth, TX. NACE 2010 conference registration begins this fall. For more info, contact the NACE office at nace@naco.org.