



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Opening Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
At the First Meeting of the Surface Transportation Conference
As prepared for delivery

Chairman Boxer, thank you for your leadership. I spent last week at home with the people I work for, and my Montana bosses sent me back with one clear priority: jobs.

The Flathead Valley in Northwestern Montana is a tourism hub and an interstate and international trade corridor. It's also home to Montana's highest unemployment rate.

On Thursday, I sat down with business leaders, local officials and contractors to discuss the Kalispell Bypass. This truck thoroughfare skirts west around town, allowing traffic to move more efficiently from surrounding communities.

That means easier access for trucks moving goods that support American jobs, less time for tourists sitting in their cars and more time spending money at local businesses. And it means dozens of construction jobs in a community that needs them.

Construction season has started. Fourteen thousand Montana jobs and 1.6 million jobs across America depend on this Highway Bill.

The bipartisan Senate bill received a unanimous vote from the Environment and Public Works Committee's 18 urban, rural, western, eastern, northern, southern, progressive and conservative Senators. And 75 percent of the Senate supported it.

It provides certainty communities need to plan and begin construction, and it invests in highway jobs without adding a dime to the deficit. In fact, our official scorekeeper, the Congressional Budget Office, says it reduces the deficit.

As Chairman of the Finance Committee, I worked with members of both parties to achieve three goals: guarantee funding through September 2013; not add to the deficit; and keep the Highway Trust Fund solvent moving forward.

Over the next two years, we put \$9.2 billion into the Highway Trust Fund, covering the cost of the bill and leaving a \$3.6 billion cushion.

In total, we put \$14 billion into the Highway Trust Fund over ten years. This actually reduces the deficit by \$10 billion over the 10-year budget window.

Where possible, we focused on the nexus to transportation and energy. We included an idea from Republican Senators to transfer the Leaking Underground Storage Tank fund's \$3 billion surplus and

one-third of future revenues into the Highway Trust Fund. Both rely on the fuel tax for funding, so this made sense.

We comply with the House Republicans' proposed budget, with its "Reserve Fund," by replenishing the General Fund for any amounts moved into the Highway Trust Fund.

The Finance Committee also paid for infrastructure programs communities rely on that are outside of the Highway Trust Fund: Secure Rural Schools, Payment in Lieu of Taxation and the Land Water Conservation Fund.

This shorter bill is what we could afford. It buys time to discuss what Americans want for the 21st Century and how to pay for it. It provides significant reforms that address national priorities, like program consolidation, project delivery, data improvement, performance measures, more safety funding and a National Freight Network. And it ensures we don't leave construction jobs stuck at a yellow light, waiting for certainty to move forward.

There are projects just like the Kalispell Bypass in every one of our states that need a green light from this bill. So, let's get to work.

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