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Vermont Officials Pave Way for Transportation Funding Discussion

Lt. Gov. Phil Scott, U.S. Rep. Peter Welch, Transportation Secretary Brian Searles lead efforts to shine a spotlight on national transportation funding crisis.

MONTPELIER - With the Highway Trust Fund projected to become insolvent this year, the National Lieutenant Governors Association unanimously passed a bipartisan resolution, cosponsored by Lt. Governor Phil Scott, R-Vt., and Lt. Governor Ralph Northam, D-Va., calling on Congress to “develop a shared, long term vision for surface transportation.”

“Secretary Brian Searles and Congressman Peter Welch were instrumental in bringing this matter to the attention of the Vermont House and Senate Transportation Committees, which prompted the resolution,” Lt. Gov. Scott said. “In addition, Congressman Welch continues to lead roundtable discussions and meetings with key transportation leaders from both parties to bring attention to the issue and develop strategies for the future.”

Friday’s vote followed a Thursday panel discussion moderated by Lt. Gov. Scott at the NLGA Federal-State Relations Meeting in Washington, D.C., entitled: “How Will States Fund Road Projects – Starting this Summer?” Since federal law says the Highway Trust Fund cannot run a negative balance, it’s reported that the U.S. Department of Transportation will likely begin taking special actions this summer, including substantially delaying payments to states or paying a significantly reduced share.

“I commend Lt. Gov. Scott and other lieutenant governors from around the country for this resolution urging Congress to act on federal transportation funding,” Vermont Transportation Secretary Brian Searles said. “Without adequate funding the deterioration of our roads, bridges and other systems will affect every Vermonter’s quality of life and have a negative impact on safety, tourism and business in general.”

Testimony offered by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials indicates that unless Congress either increases Highway Trust Fund revenues or provides additional General Fund support, states won’t be able to commit virtually any new federal funds to surface transportation projects starting next fiscal year. This could result in states delaying much-needed projects this coming construction season due to the long term funding needs of larger, ongoing projects.

“Renewing federal transportation programs is about more than paving roads and filling potholes. A robust transportation sector is essential to the success of American businesses and to rebuilding the middle class,” U.S. Rep. Peter Welch, D-Vt., said. “I commend Lt. Governor Scott’s efforts and believe that Congress needs to put aside

bipartisan posturing and work together, the way we do in Vermont, to find a long term solution to surface transportation funding.”

Rep. Welch is hosting a transportation roundtable at 10 a.m. today, Monday, March 24, at the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation offices, 128 Lakeside Ave., Burlington. Participants include Lt. Gov. Scott, Secretary Searles, chairs of the Vermont Senate and House transportation committees, and other statewide transportation leaders. The discussion will focus on public transportation and Vermont’s priorities around alternative transportation. ***This event is open to the media.***

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